



# Page by Page



Laura Lee  
Gulledge



Everyone sees a quiet redhead who draws things. But when I close my eyes, I'm laughing and screaming and scheming and daydreaming.

New city. New friends. New Paige?

When Paige's parents move her family from Virginia to New York City, Paige doesn't know where she fits in anymore. At first, the only thing keeping her company is her notebook, where she pours her worries and observations and experiments with her secret identity: ARTIST. With the confidence the book brings her, she starts to make friends and shake up her family's expectations. But is she ready to become the person she draws in her notebook?

Laura Lee Gulledge's stunning art digs deep into the soul and exposes all the ups, downs, and sideways feelings of being a young adult on the edge of the rest of your life.



**DISCARDED**





Laura Lee Gulledge



AMULET BOOKS  
NEW YORK



Sketchbook

# Rule #1

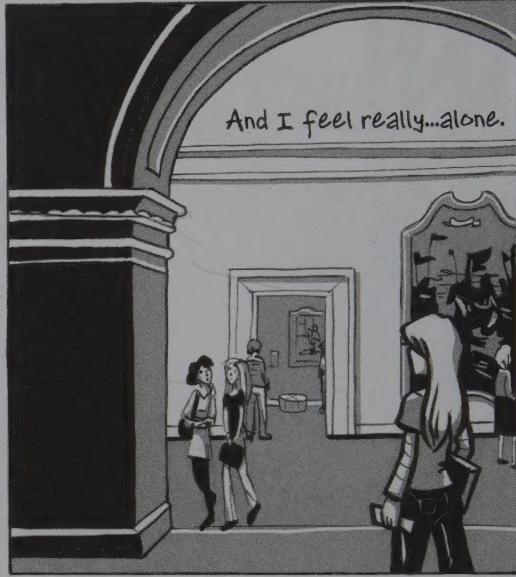
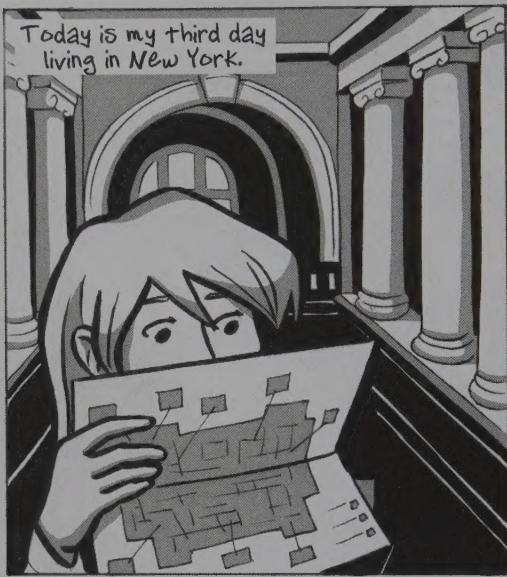
No more excuses!  
Buy a sketchbook and draw  
a few pages each week.



-December-





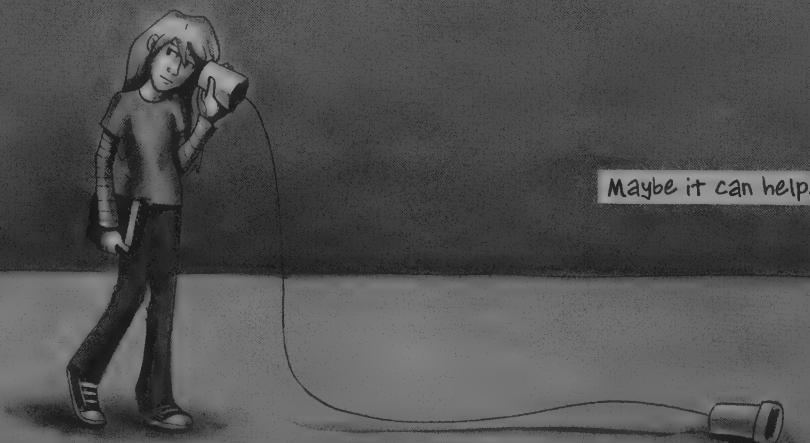




And she's an artist.  
I wonder...



...did she live in her  
head like I do?





It helped my grandma.  
She was a painter.

And she came up with her own rules as  
she taught herself how to be an artist.  
So I'm trying out her lessons.

Sketchbook Rules

1. No more excuses! Draw a few pages each week. Buy a sketchbook.
2. Draw what you know. If you feel like see it... draw it.
3. Show your art to yourself. What's going on in your head?
4. Give yourself permission. Don't take it all so seriously.

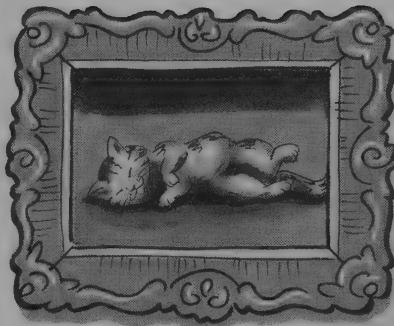
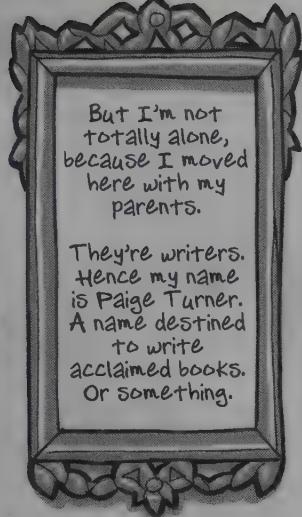
I wish she was here. In this city,  
I feel so lost. It's like I'm  
surrounded by two-dimensional people.

The only people who really KNOW me are back in Virginia. Like my best friend, Diana. With her I'm 100% undiluted Paige.



I miss our hikes on Carter Mountain, our finger painting nights, and drawing games in chemistry class...





But I'm not  
totally alone,  
because I moved  
here with my  
parents.

They're writers.  
Hence my name  
is Paige Turner.  
A name destined  
to write  
acclaimed books.  
Or something.

Oh, and we also brought along  
Harley. Best. Cat. Ever.



But I don't feel totally like  
myself around them. I bite my tongue a lot.  
It just makes things easier...

My parents, like most everybody else, see this version of me: The quiet redhead who draws stuff.



But when I close my eyes, I'm more like  
THIS under the surface: I'm laughing and  
screaming and scheming and daydreaming.

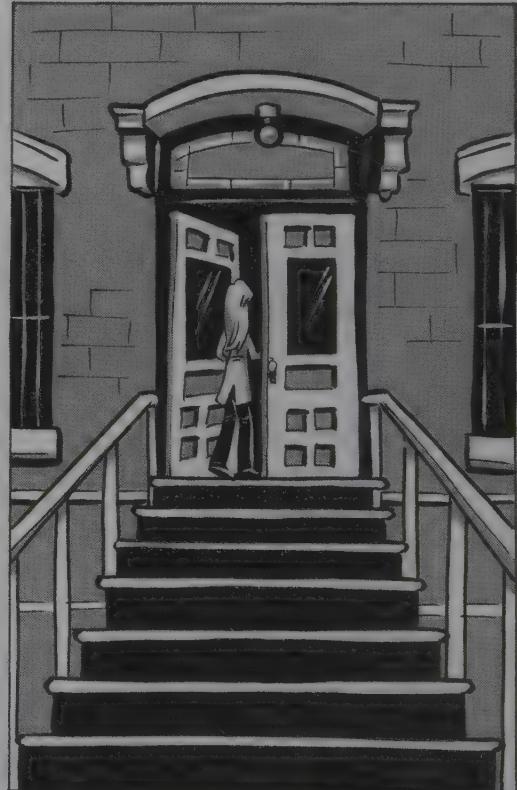




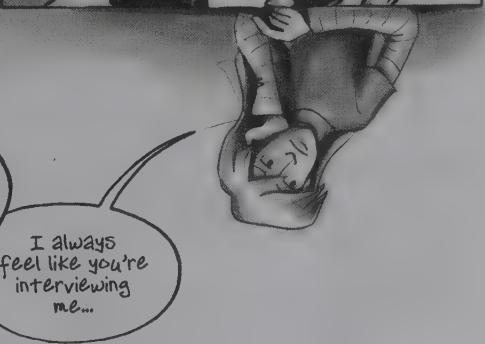
Living quietly feels safer.  
But artists draw inspiration from  
challenges, right? What have I  
learned from playing it safe?



This is my new home:  
Brooklyn.



It's not as hectic as Manhattan, but it's still  
really weird going from a house with a big yard to  
a brownstone with a big stoop.









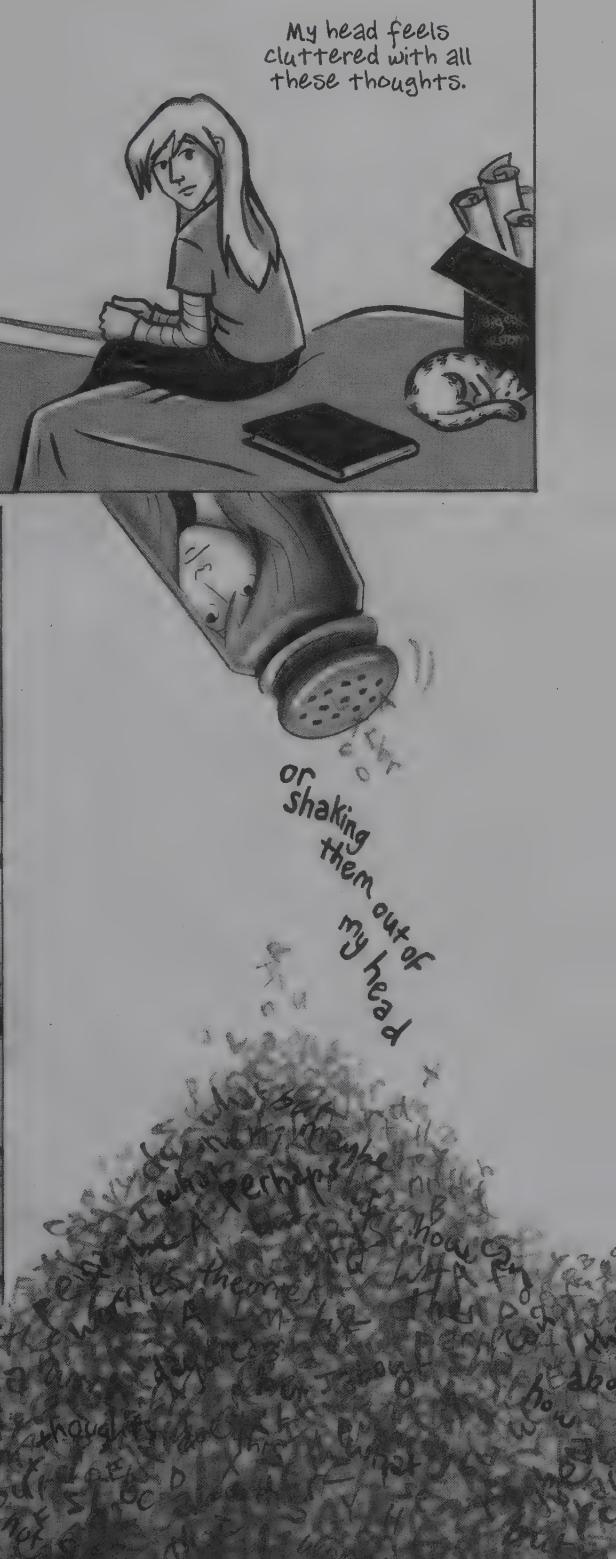
My head feels cluttered with all these thoughts.

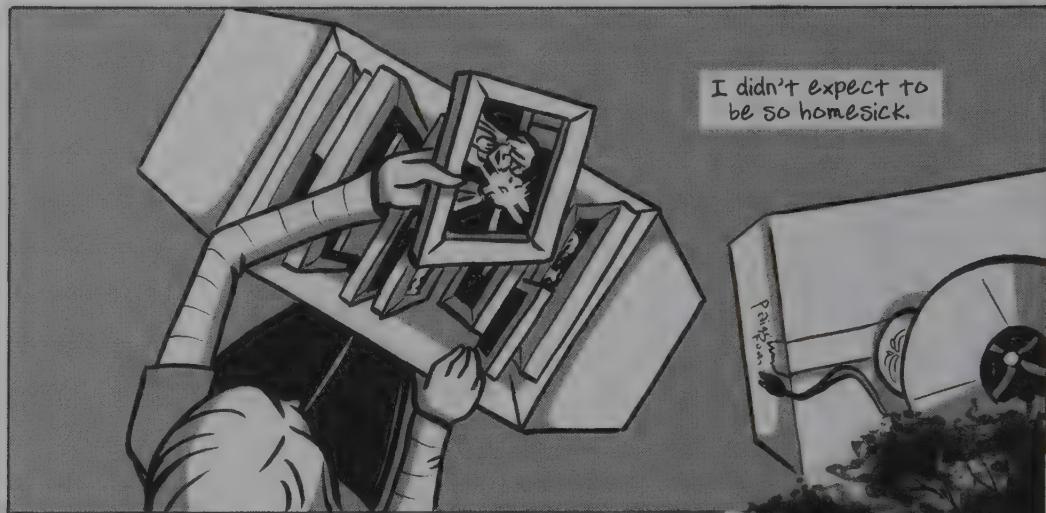


I hope that drawing about this stuff will help clear things out.



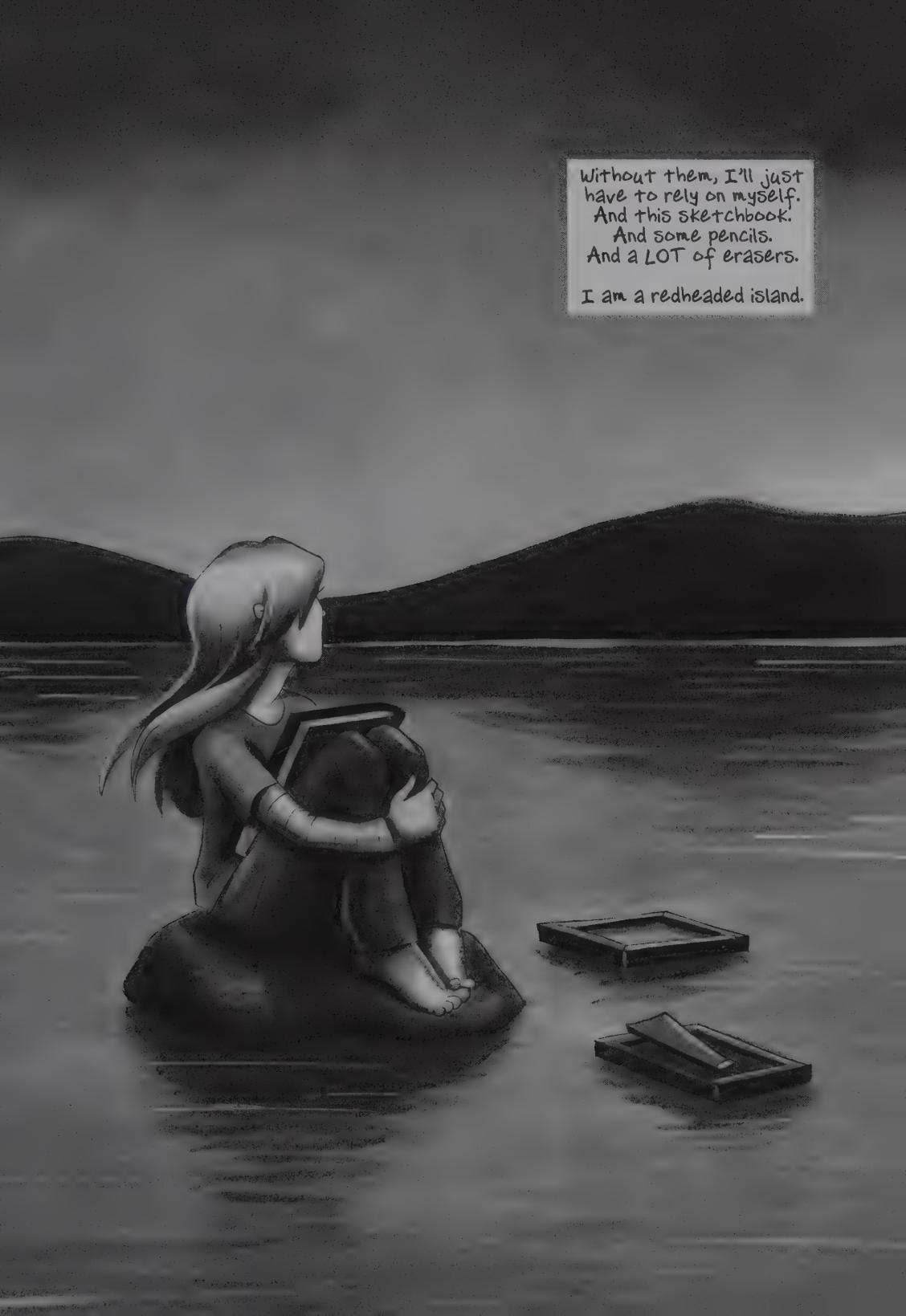
or shaking them out of my head





And I hate how all my friends now live in picture frames.





Without them, I'll just  
have to rely on myself.  
And this sketchbook.  
And some pencils.  
And a LOT of erasers.

I am a redhead island.



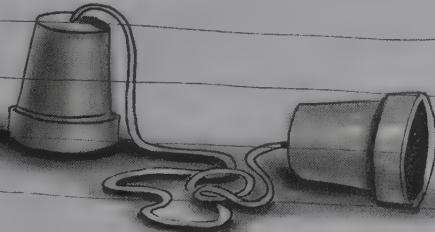
Where to start? Well, according to Grandma, the only thing you have control over as an artist is **HOW MUCH** art you make. Don't worry about the path; just go.



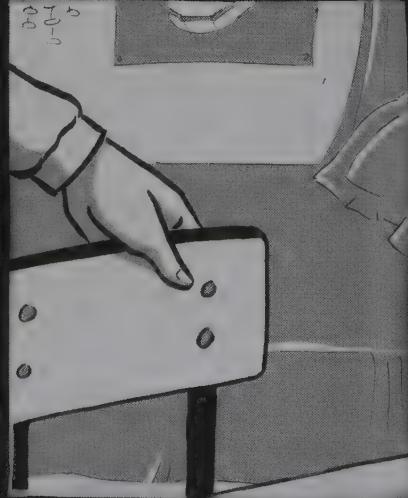
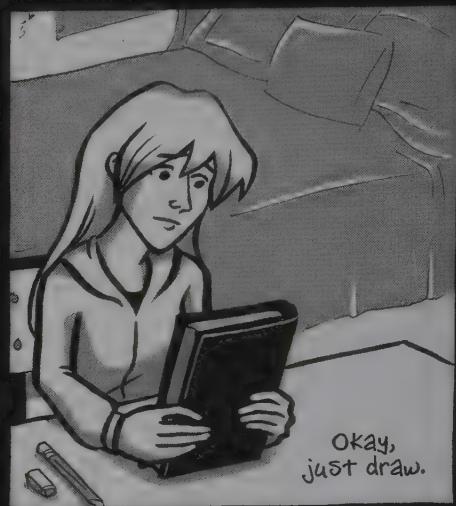
So I'll do a few pages each week, focusing on one drawing at a time. Page by page...or rather, page by Paige.

## Rule #2

Draw what you know.  
If you feel it or see it...  
DRAW IT!



- Still December -



what is  
THAT  
supposed to be?

What if my drawings  
really suck?  
I can't tear them  
out of the sketchbook,  
they'll stay there...

Shouldn't you  
be doing  
something  
more  
important?

Art is just  
silly and  
pointless.  
You know...

Grandma was a  
REAL artist;  
you're just  
pretending.

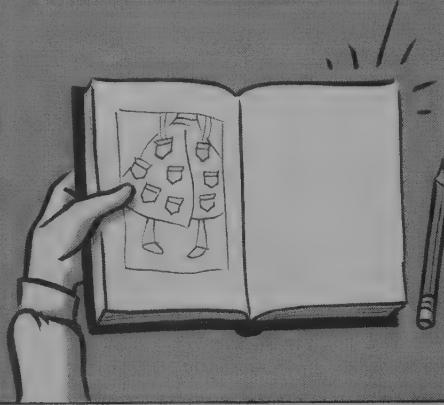
You're going to  
fail, so why  
even try?

Who cares?  
Why bother?

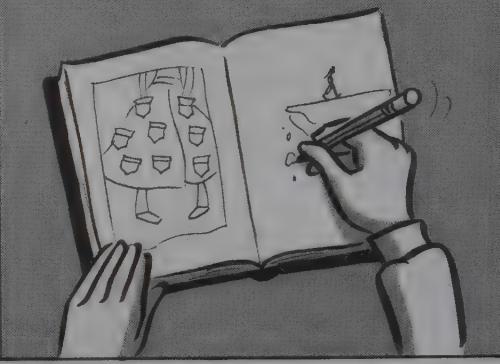
What if I have nothing to say?  
No good ideas at all?



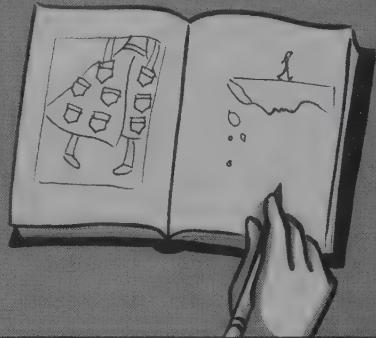
A blank piece of paper is scary.  
Where do you start?



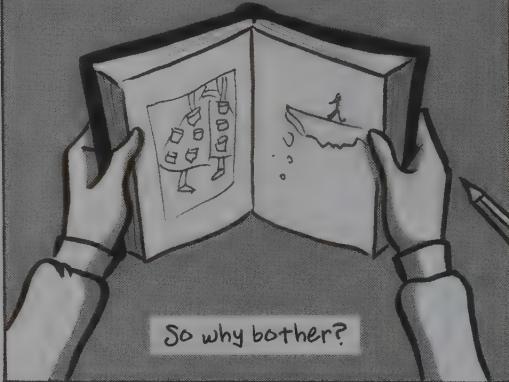
Okay, so you make some marks on it.  
And either you like it or you don't.



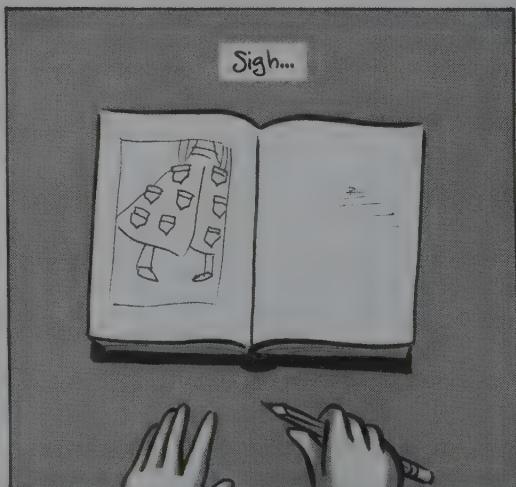
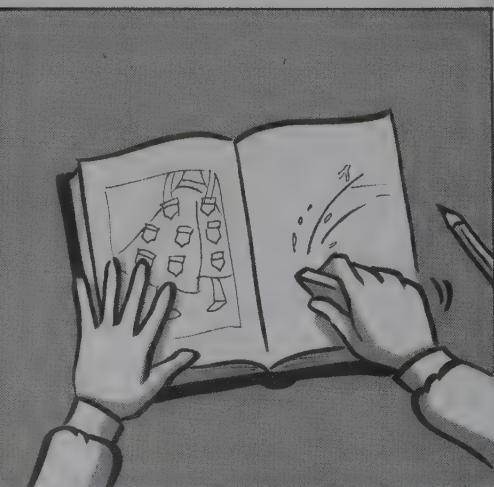
If you DO like it,  
then you're scared of messing it up.

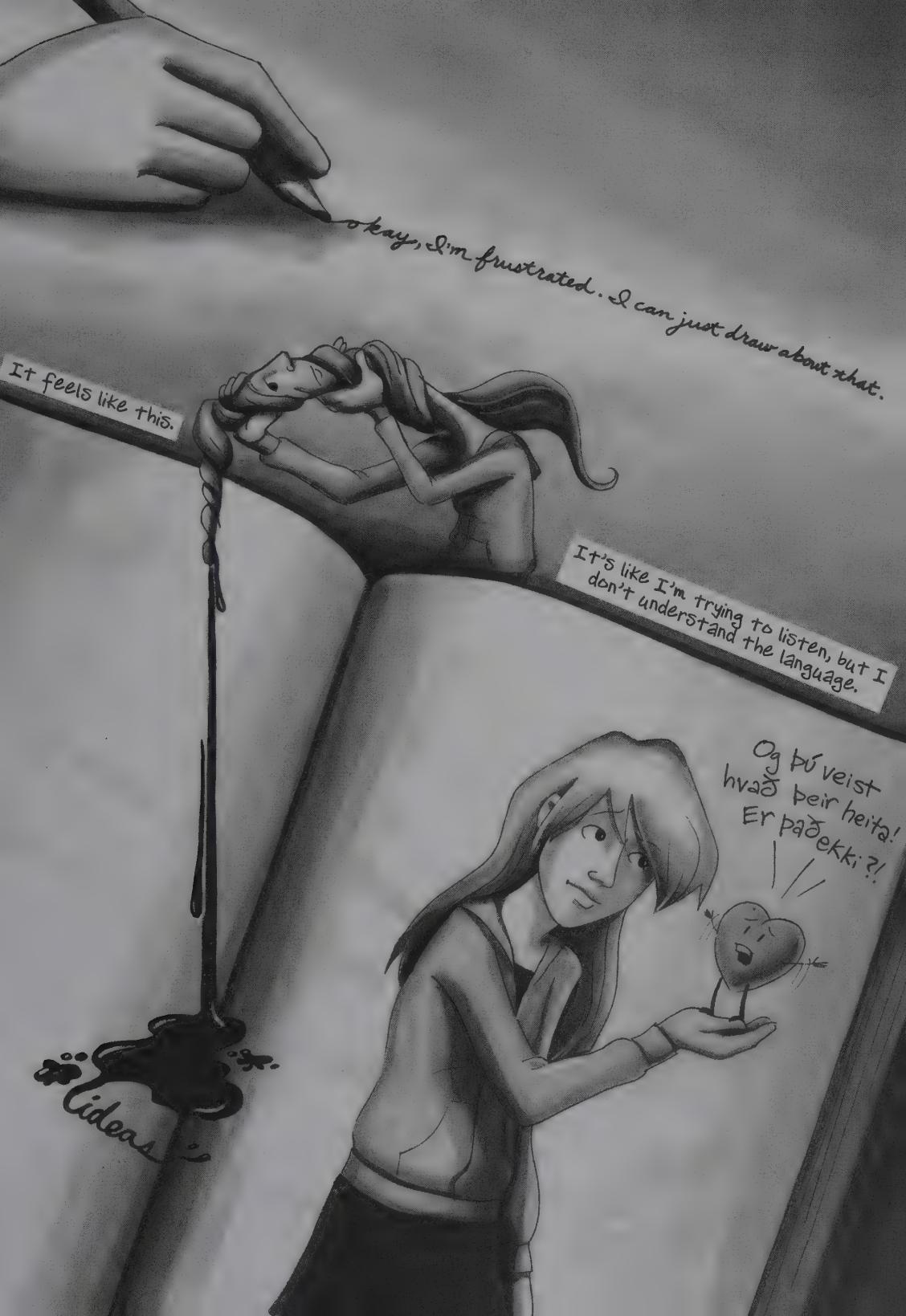


If you DON'T like it,  
then you think it's totally doomed.



Sigh...

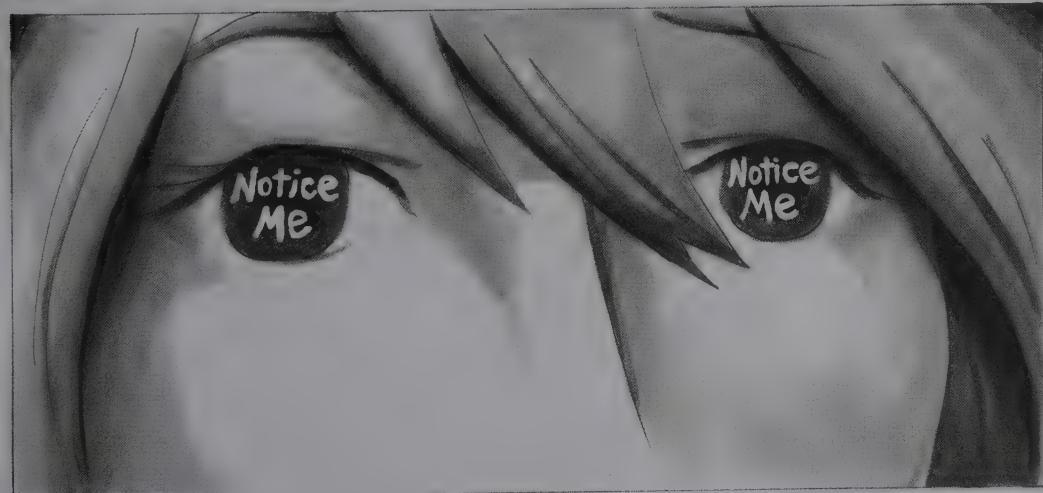




I must be making this too hard.  
I should draw what I know.  
But what do I know?

So I went out for inspiration...





So what do I like about New York?

I like how tops  
of buildings dissolve  
into fog.



I like lost  
shoes. How  
did this one  
escape from  
its owner?



I like the  
musicians in  
the subway  
stations.



I like flower  
stalls. (Especially  
ones with lilies.)



I like trash day.  
People throw out  
the weirdest things.



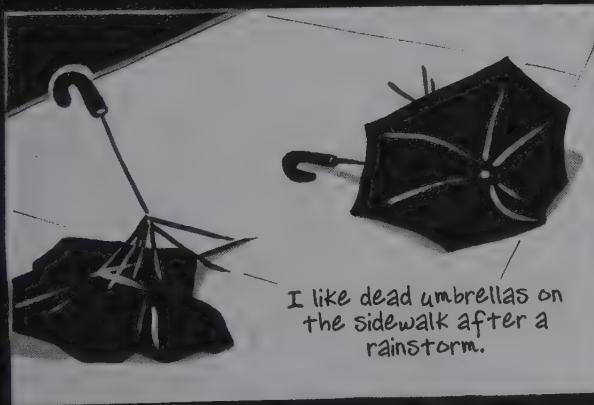
I like that  
anything goes.



I like people-watching.  
It's like window-shopping.



I like dead umbrellas  
on the sidewalk after a  
rainstorm.



But this city isn't perfect.  
It takes some adjusting.

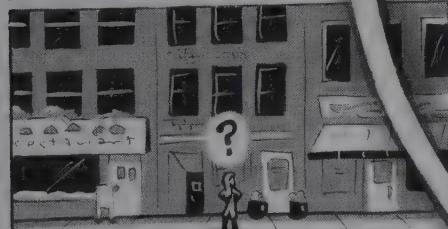
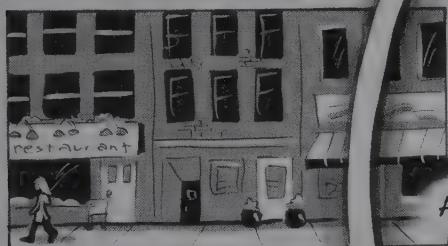
For example, it makes me  
feel really small.



And nervous.

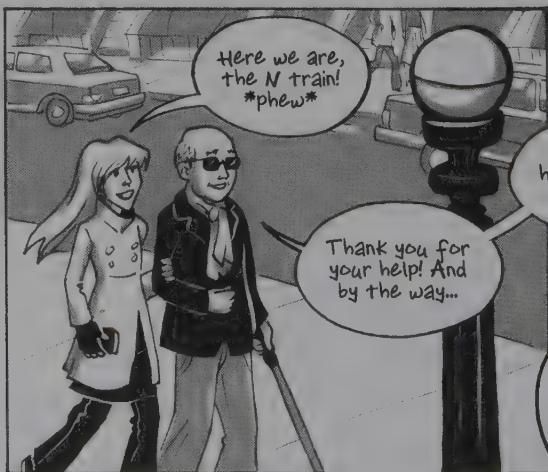


And cold.



And...lost!





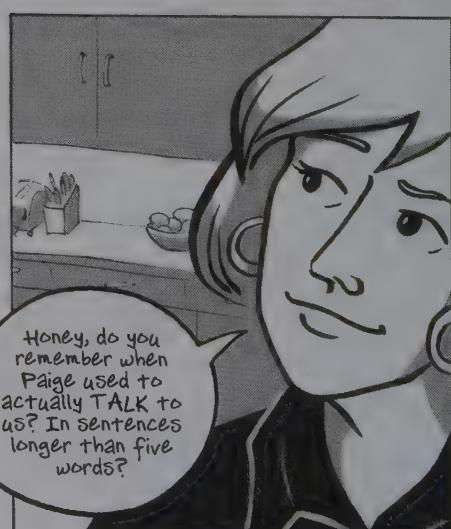


You'll learn your way around. Don't worry, there's always hope yet for blind folks like us.

Have a happy New Years!

Talk about the blind leading the blind. And yes, I see the irony in waving at a blind man.

So many ideas! Now I can go home and draw about them!





Those were the days.

That was only four words.

Smart alec.

That's two words.





"Ahh home. Let me  
come home. Home is wherever  
I'm with you..."

Diana  
Calling

Helloooo,  
Diana!

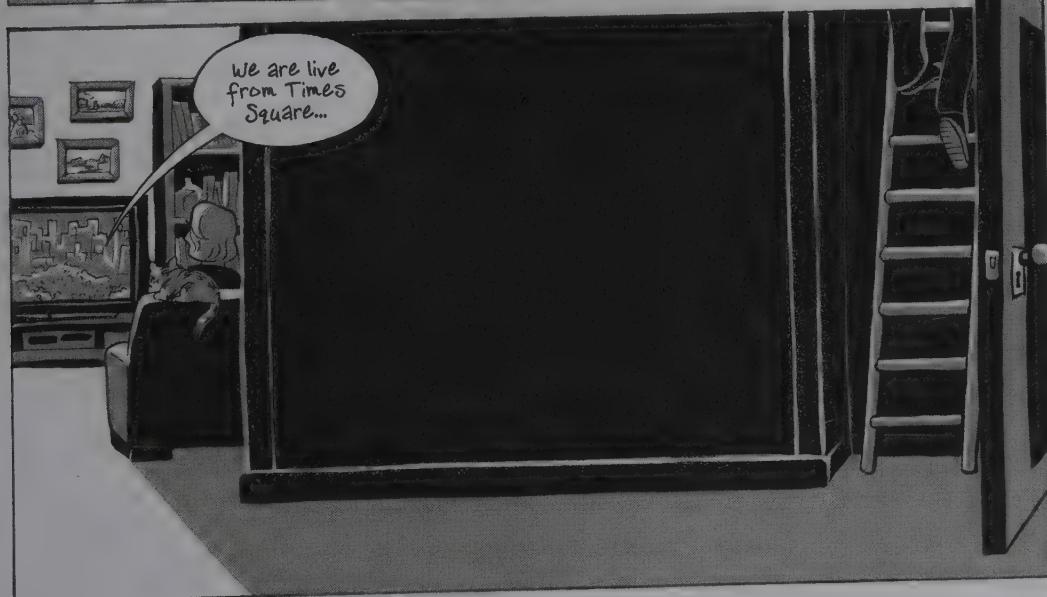
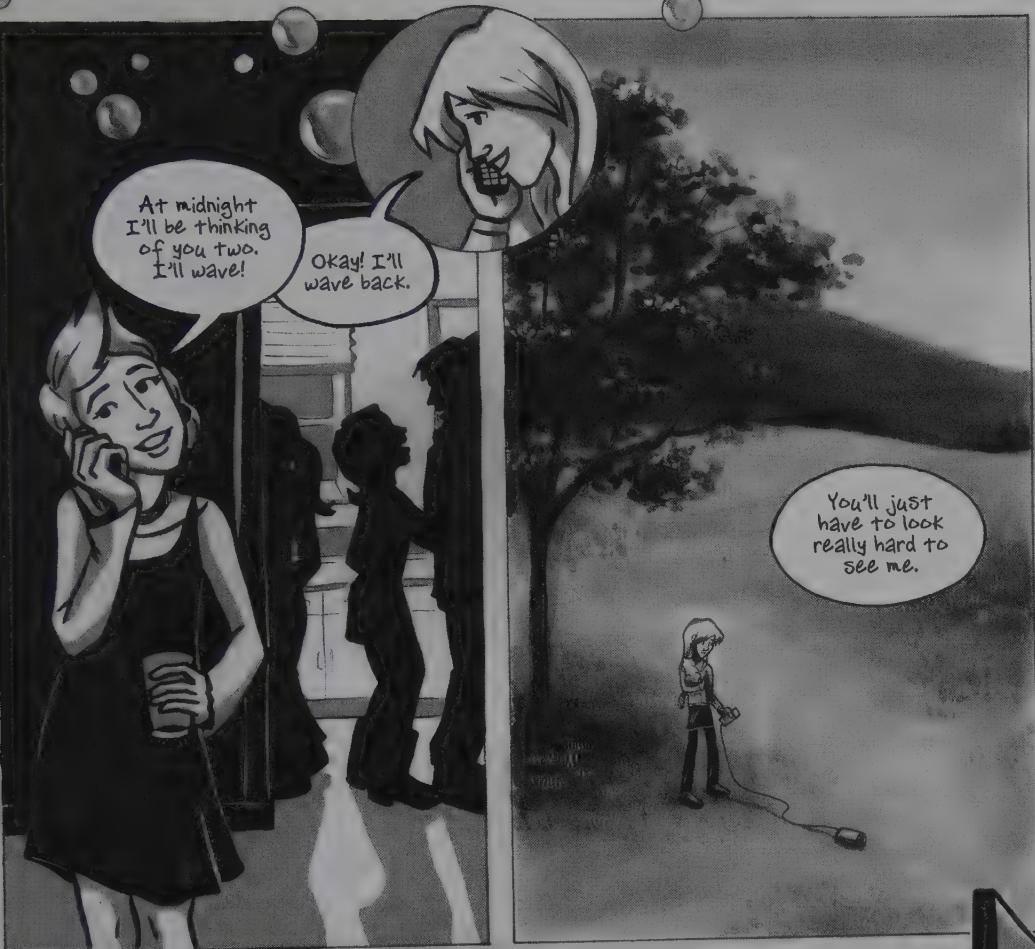
Happy New  
Year's, Paige!

We're missing  
you, too. We're all  
hanging out at Devo's  
place. Wish you could  
be here!

You, too!  
Oh, it's so good to  
hear your voice.  
I miss you so  
much!

Me, too! I'll just  
be hanging out here  
with our favorite  
sexy brunette.

Harley? I.  
Love. That.  
Cat.





So what is my resolution...  
To be an artist? Perhaps  
just to be someone new?





New city.

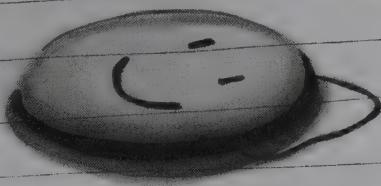


New Paige.

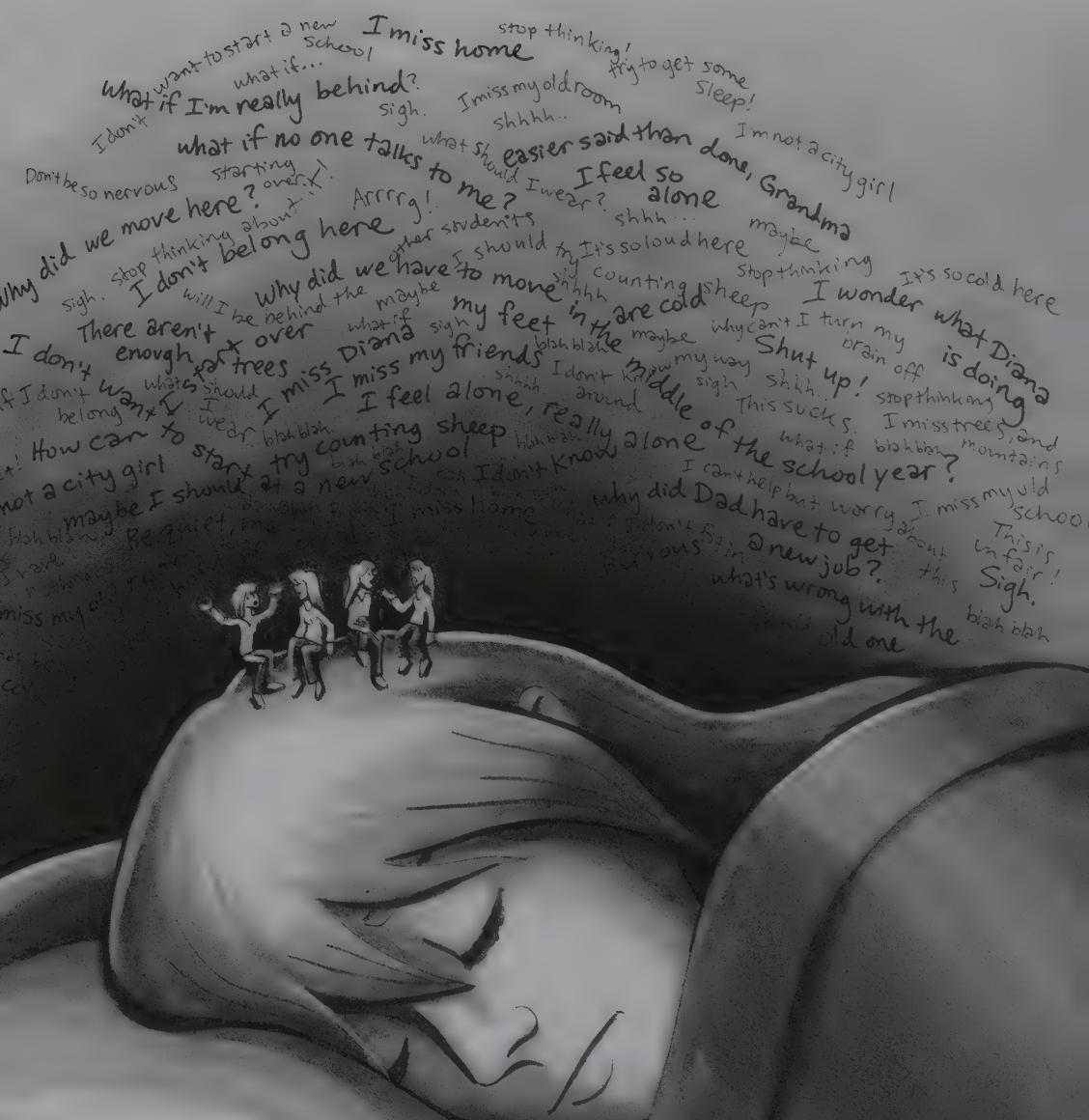


# Rule #3

Shhh... quiet...  
listen to what's going  
on in your head.

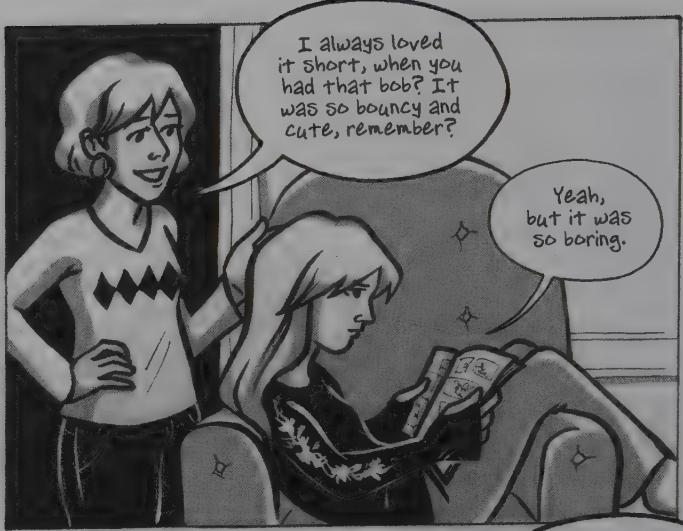


- January -





The inside of my head  
is a loud place.





Okay, I  
do need help...

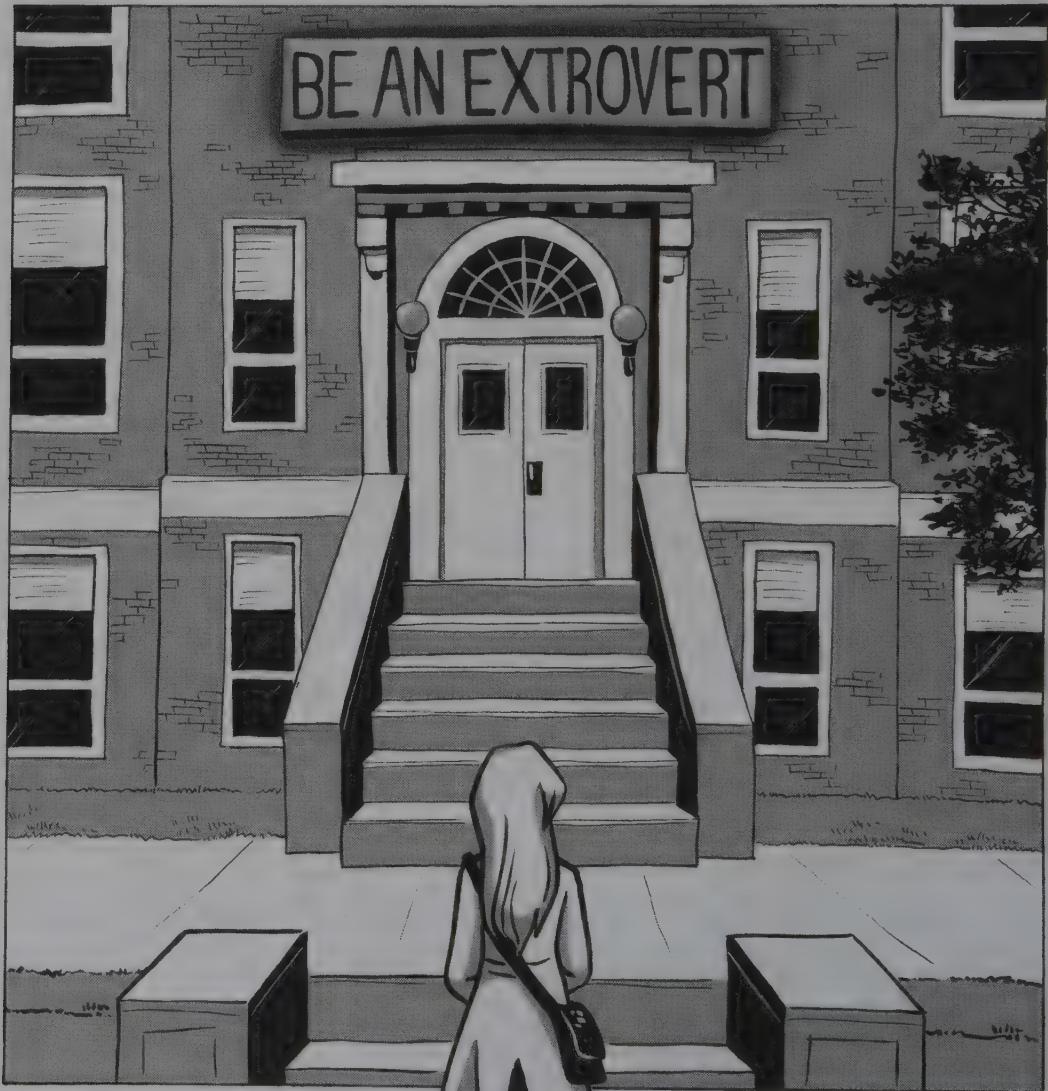


The quiet girl who  
doodles in class?



Or the mysterious  
new student...





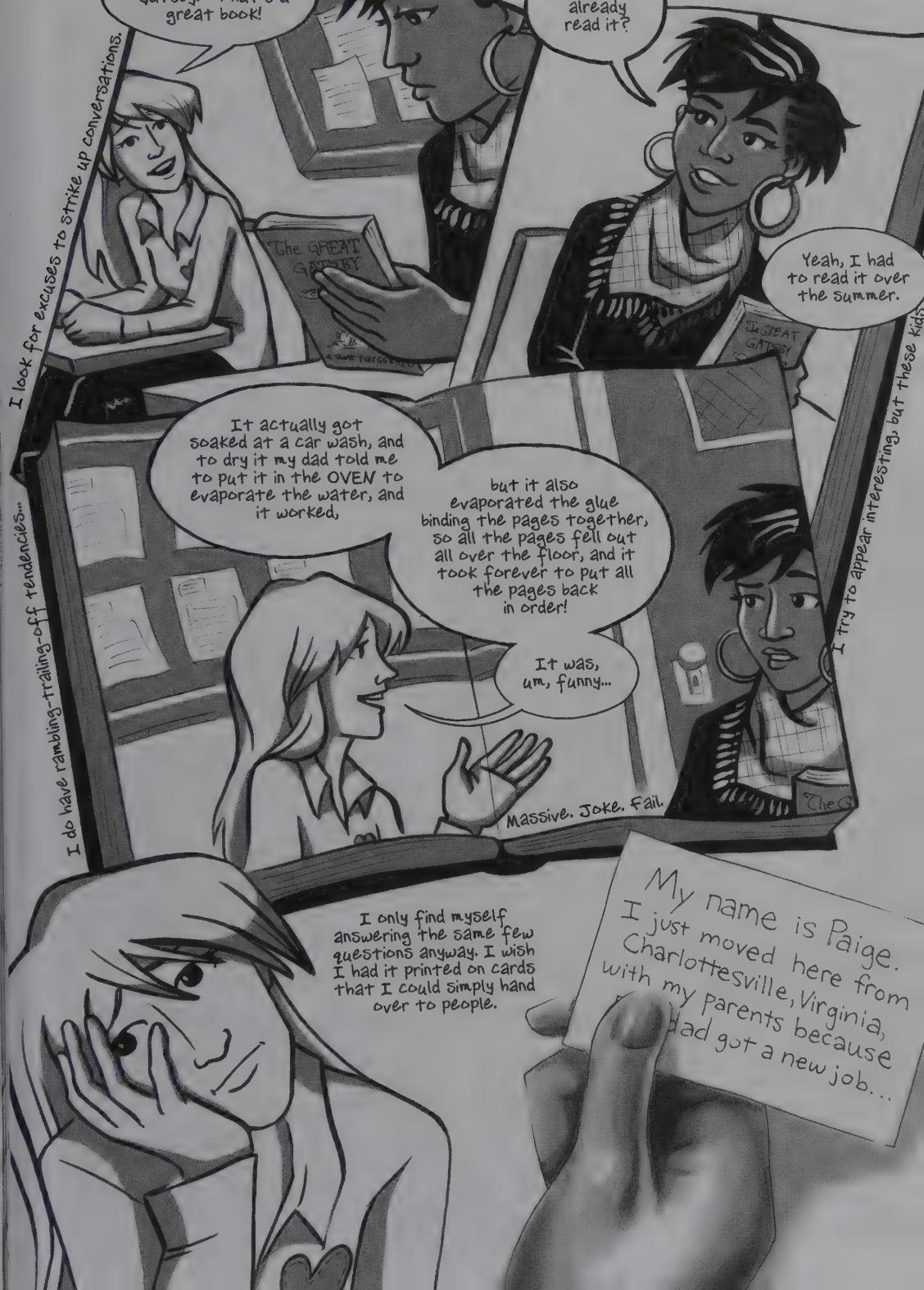


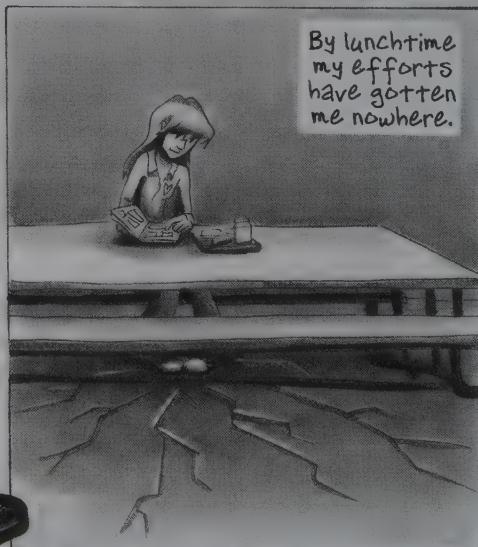
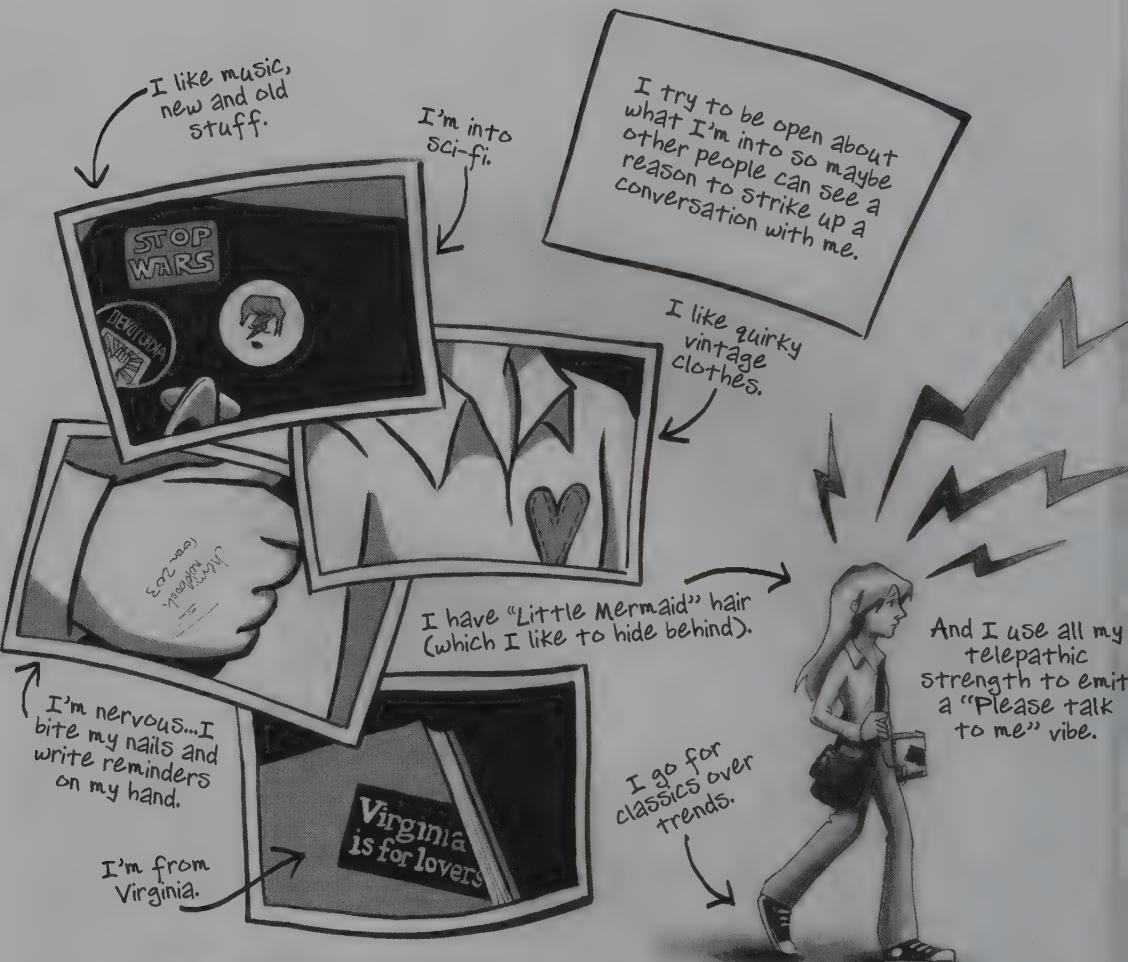
I tell myself that everyone  
else feels alone, too.

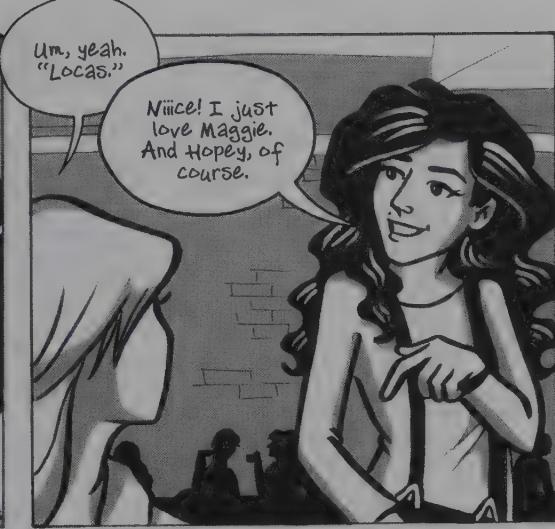
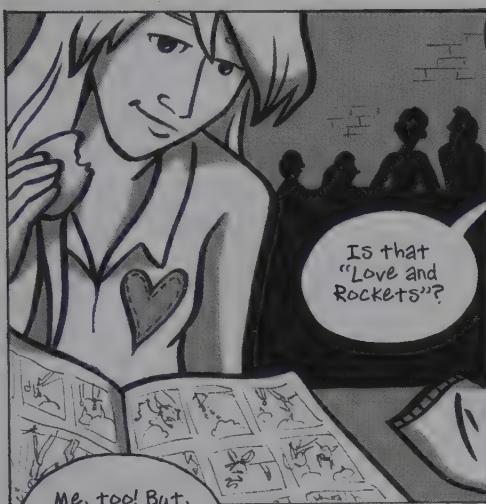


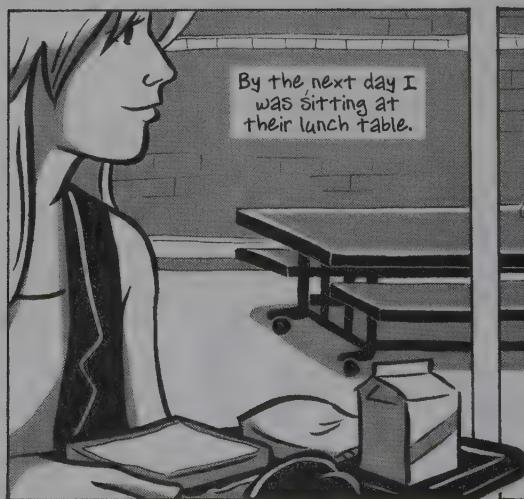
It feels like everyone is  
watching and waiting for me  
to embarrass myself.

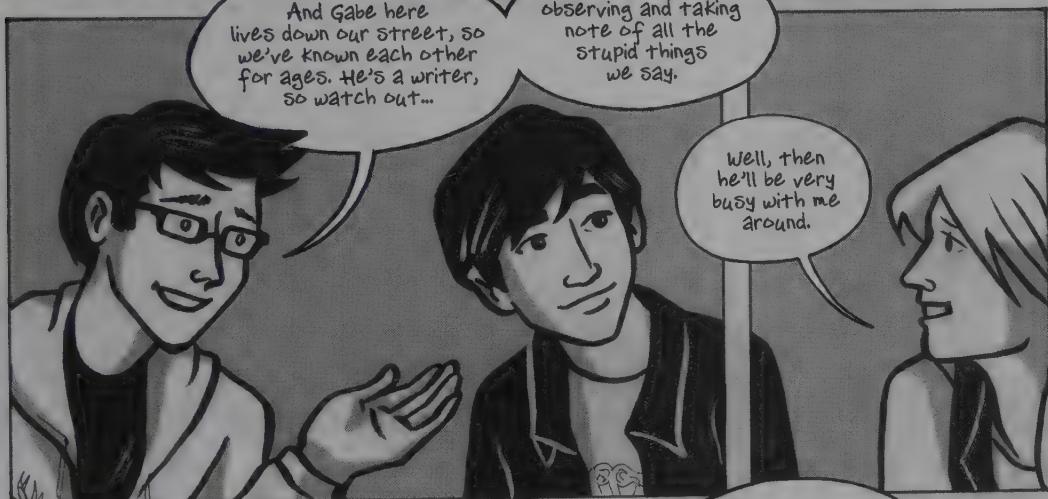
I miss Diana.

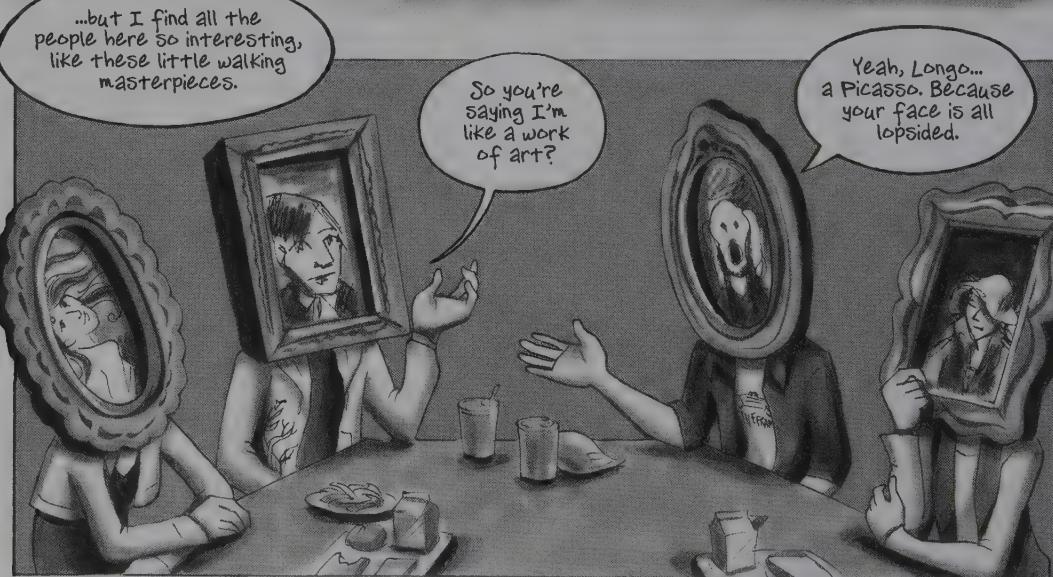
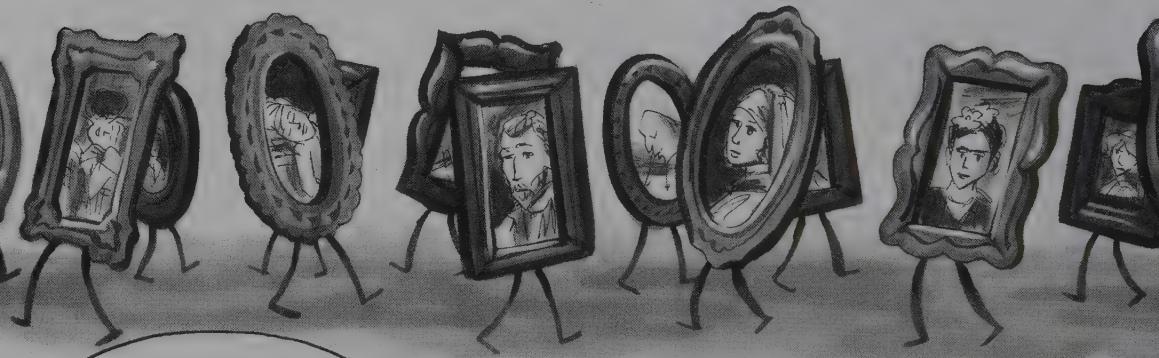


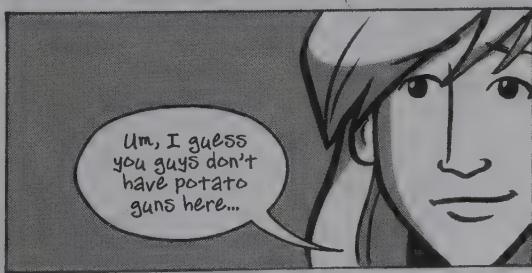
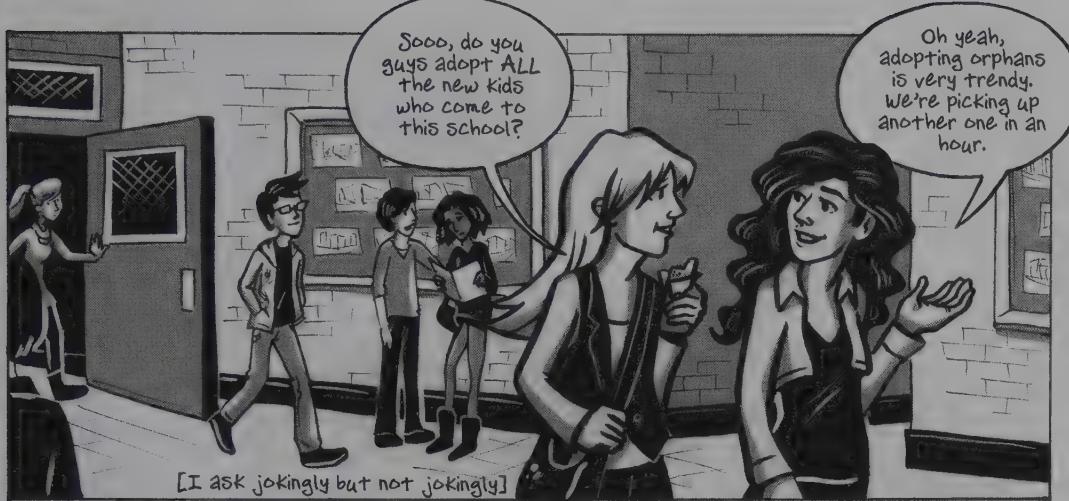


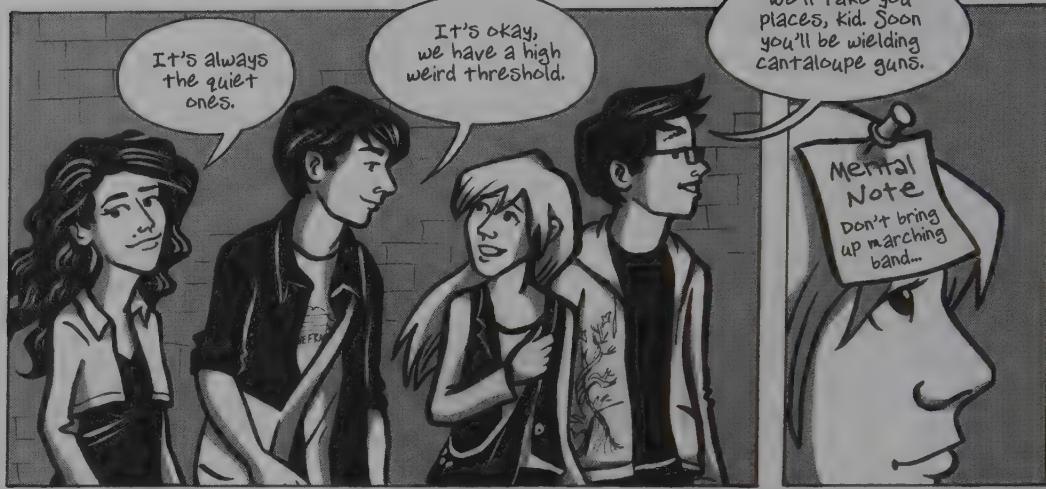


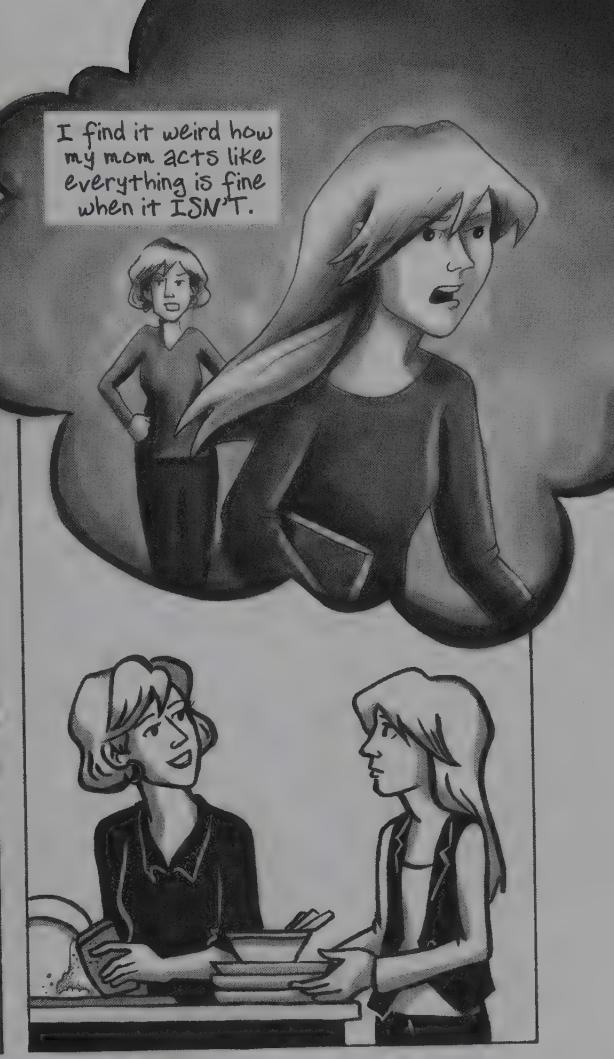


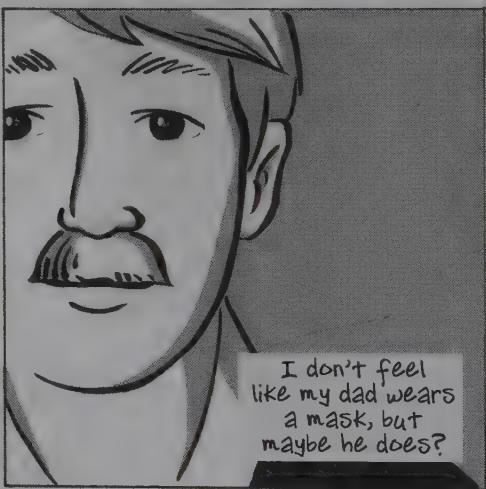






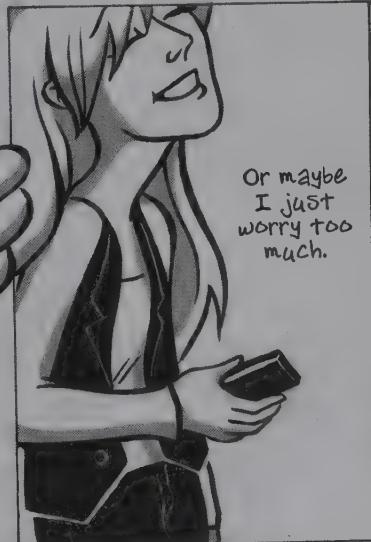
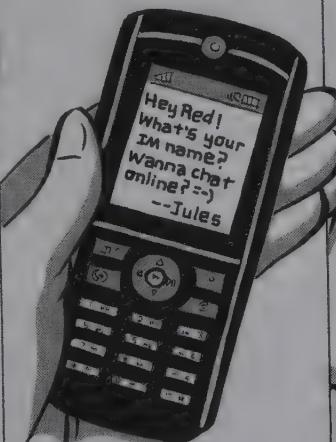






And maybe my new friends are wearing masks?



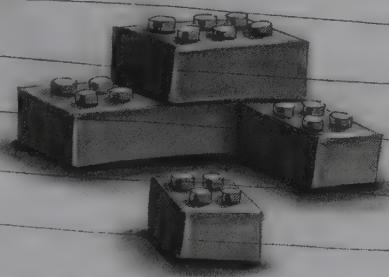




Now my head is swirling  
in a different way...  
with ideas.

# Rule #4

Let yourself FAIL.  
Don't take it all so  
personally.



-February-



I've always been scared of  
revealing too much, saying the  
wrong thing, screwing up...



I guess that's why I'm  
keeping this sketchbook  
to myself. It's easier to  
stay off the radar.

Some people complain because they're different and stand out too much. I'm the opposite...I've always been invisible.



I don't mind. People like Jules can have the spotlight.



How did I get here as a friend? I mean, I'm not that interesting.



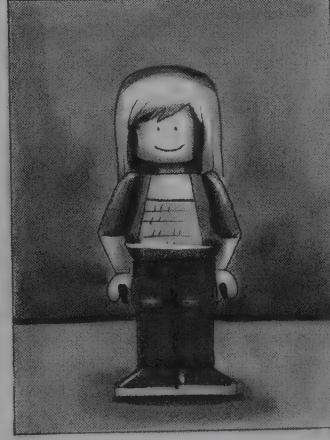
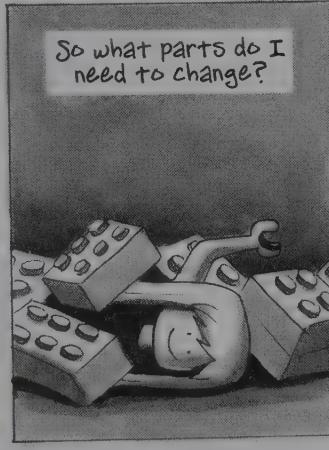
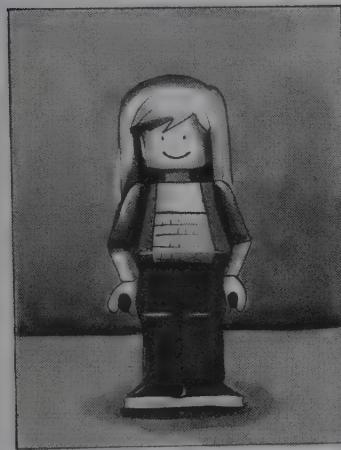
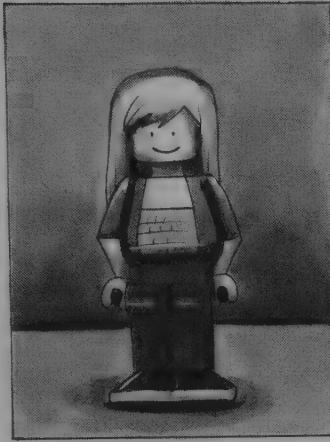
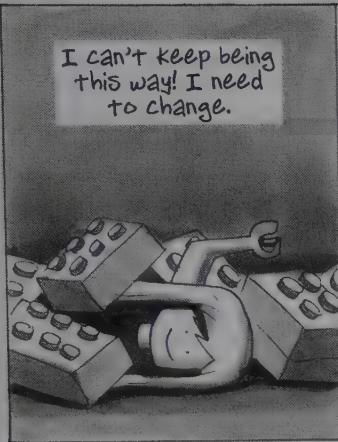


They're all better than me.

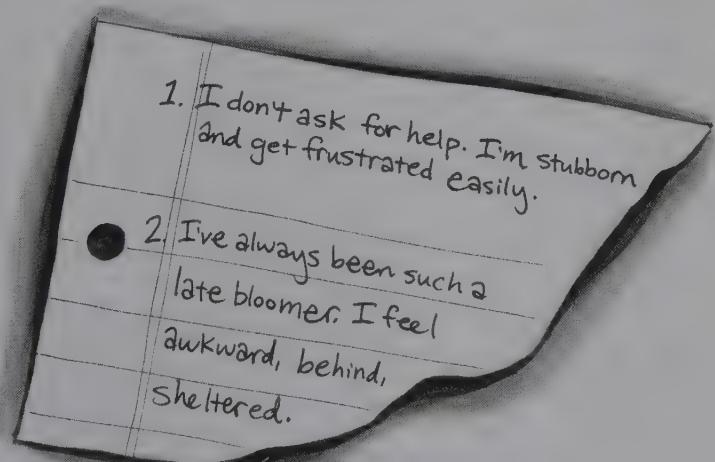
They're all better than me.

They're all better than me.





What is it that I don't like about myself?



3. My body... I hate how I'm so pale, and my legs, and I have Jane Eye Complex.\*

4. I can't open up to people. It makes me feel weak and needy... a burden.

5. I don't stand up for myself. I apologize for EVERYTHING, including my own existence.

6. I'm too self-absorbed. I'm always in my head, wrapped up in my own stuff.

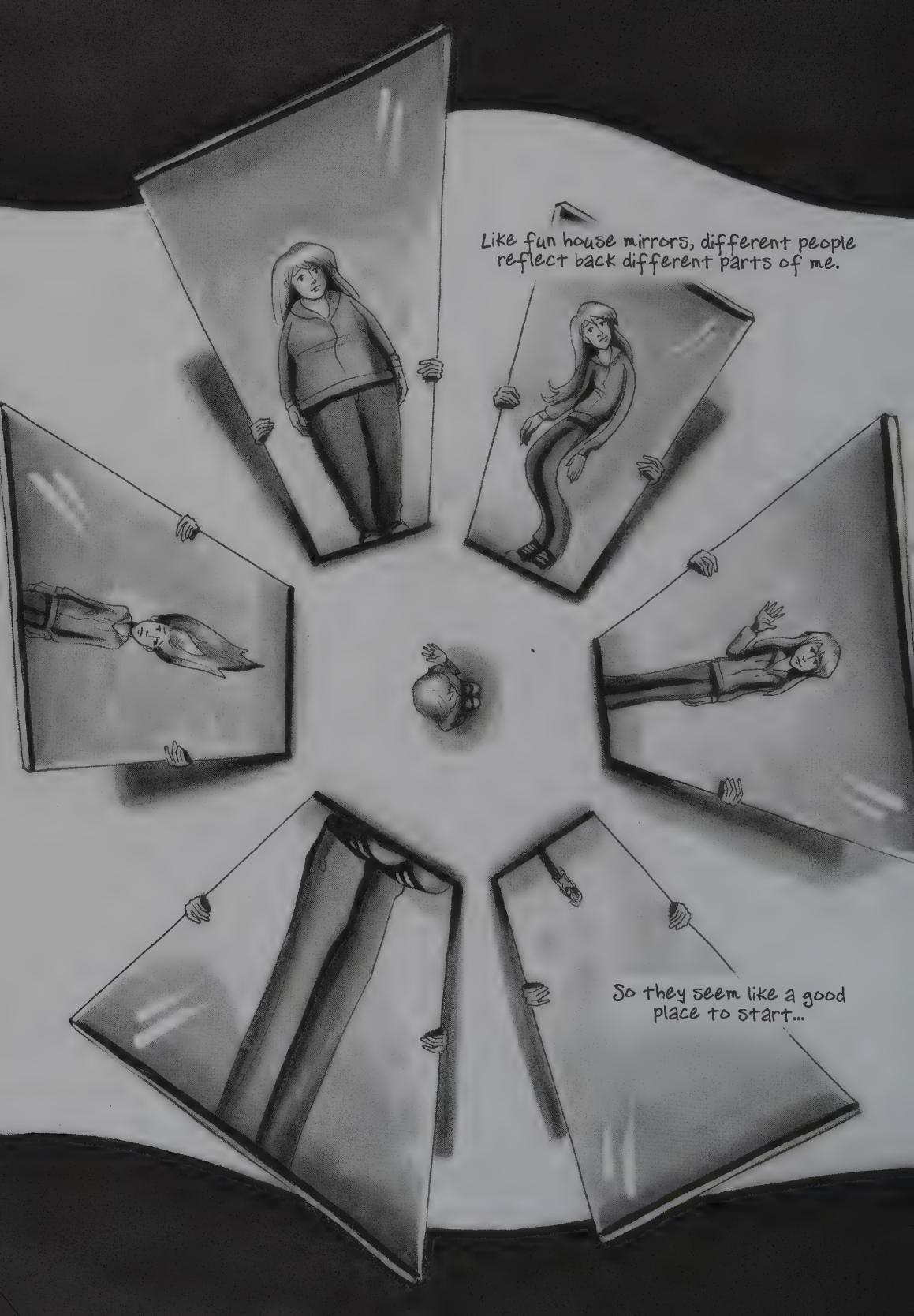
\* Jane Eye Complex: when a plain, ordinary girl hopes someone will notice her awesomeness and pluck her from obscurity.



IT'S up to me to sculpt myself into who I want to be...



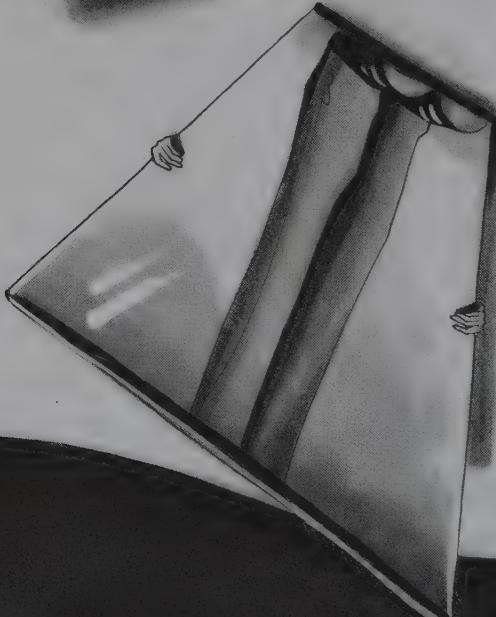
...and move some wires around.

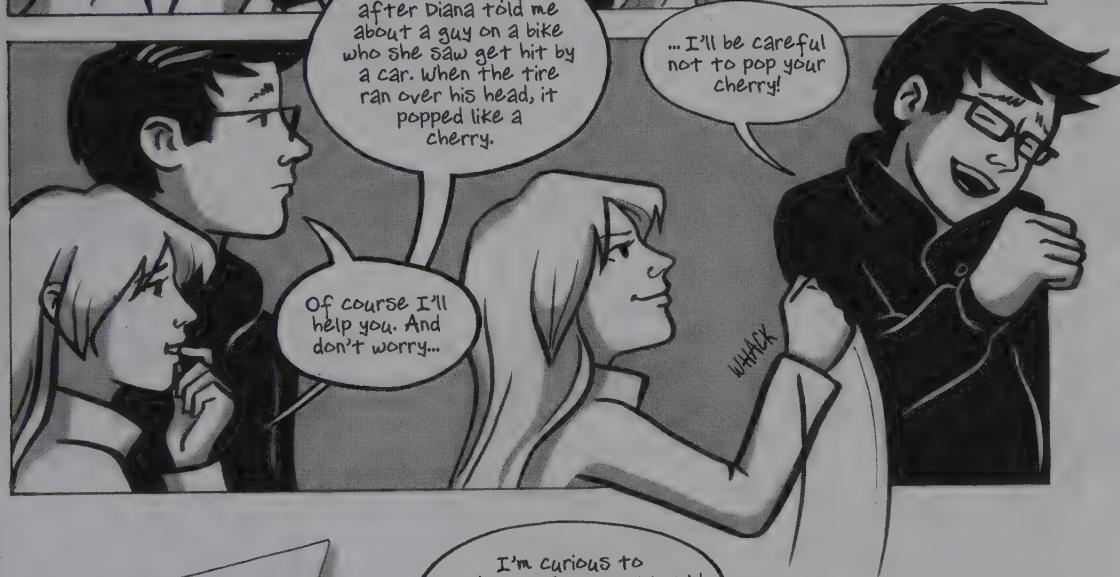
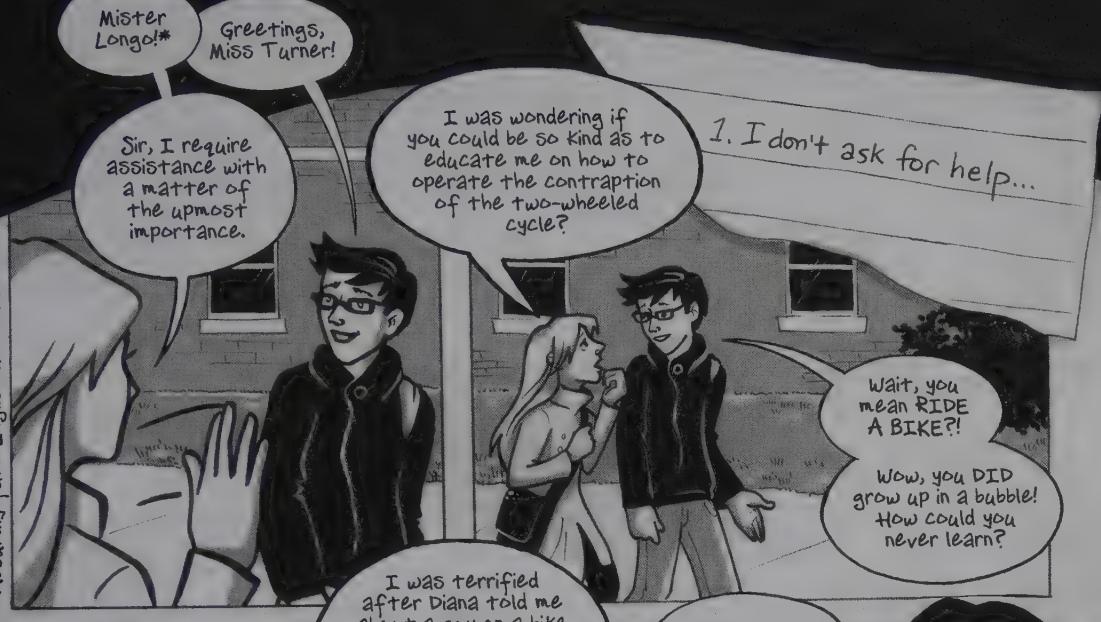


Like fun house mirrors, different people reflect back different parts of me.



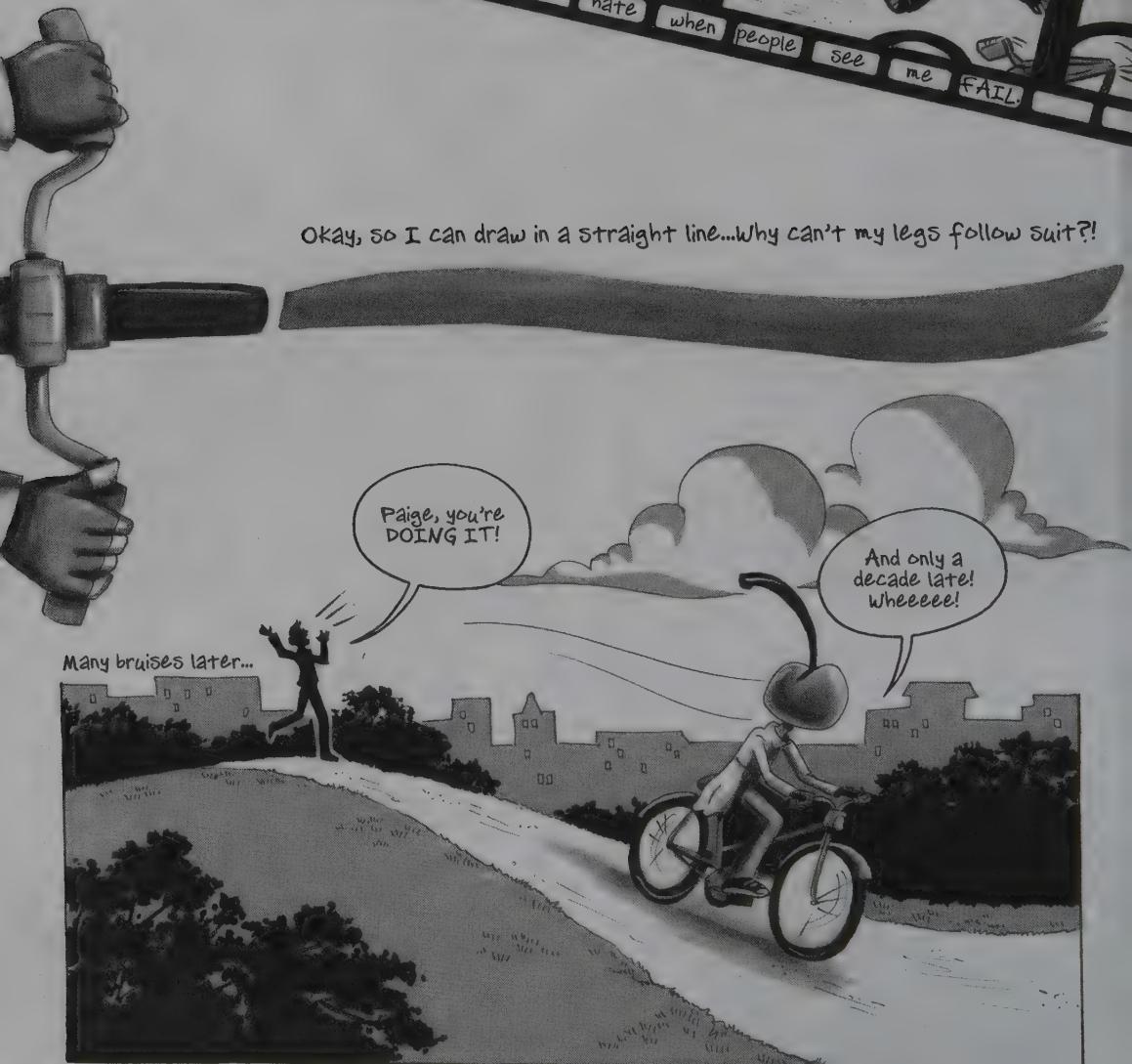
So they seem like a good place to start...







Okay, so I can draw in a straight line...Why can't my legs follow suit?!



So, Paige,  
if you need me  
to teach you  
anything else—

GO AWAY,  
LONGO!!

Actually,  
Jules, I need  
YOUR expertise  
with something.

Moi?  
Hmmm... I'm  
intrigued.

Oh, get  
your mind  
out of the  
gutter.

Okay, so you  
might have noticed  
that I don't wear  
skirts or show my  
legs at all?

Yeah, I  
figured you just  
weren't the  
skirty type.

Well, it's  
because I hate my  
legs. They're pale  
and chubby and I've  
never even bothered  
to shave them.

Really?  
Oh, they're fine.  
And your peach  
fuzz is annoyingly  
invisible.

3. My body... I hate...  
my legs...

I know it's a  
silly problem,  
but I want to  
get over it.

Say no more!  
I'm a firm  
supporter of  
girls showing  
more skin.



4. I can't open up to people...



What's with you, Paige? You have pensive face.

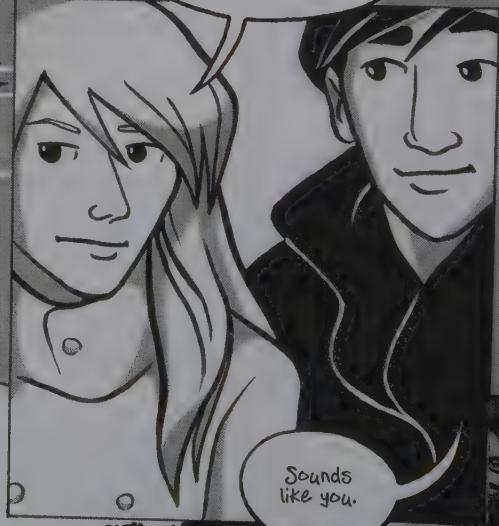
Oh, come on. Spit it out!

Nothing. I, well, I don't want to complain...

I'm mad at my mom.

She's so fake! Acting like everything is happy and perfect all the time. Like an actress in a play.

Sounds like you.



What?! That's not true. I'm not like her.

You haven't told her this stuff. You pretend, too.

Why not be honest with her?

Damn you and your insightfulness!

Nice skirt, by the way.

Thanks!  
But my legs are FROZEN. Let's get out of here...

Knock, knock!

Paige, can you clean your room tonight?

5. I don't stand up for myself...

Tonight?  
Why?



So? She's family. She doesn't care if my room is messy.

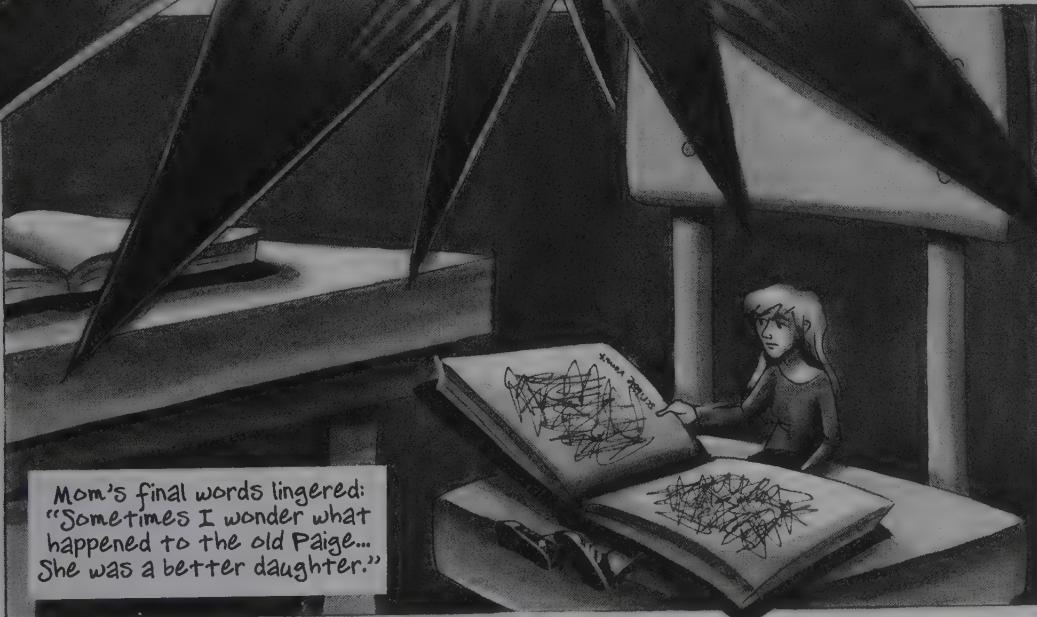


Geez, why do you care so much about what other people think?



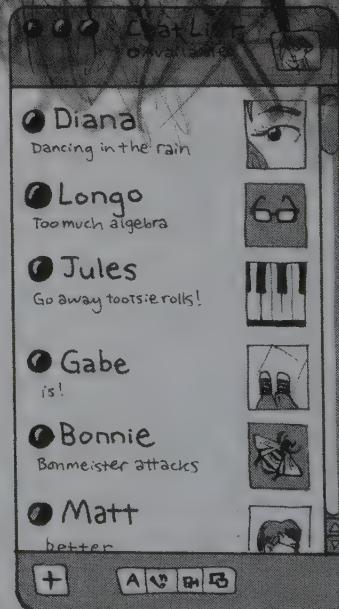
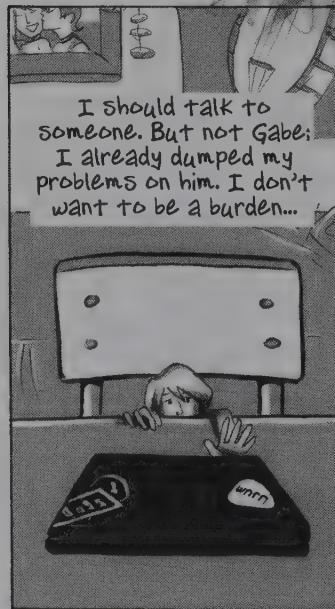


Mom, if you weren't



Scribbling  
makes me  
feel

Better.

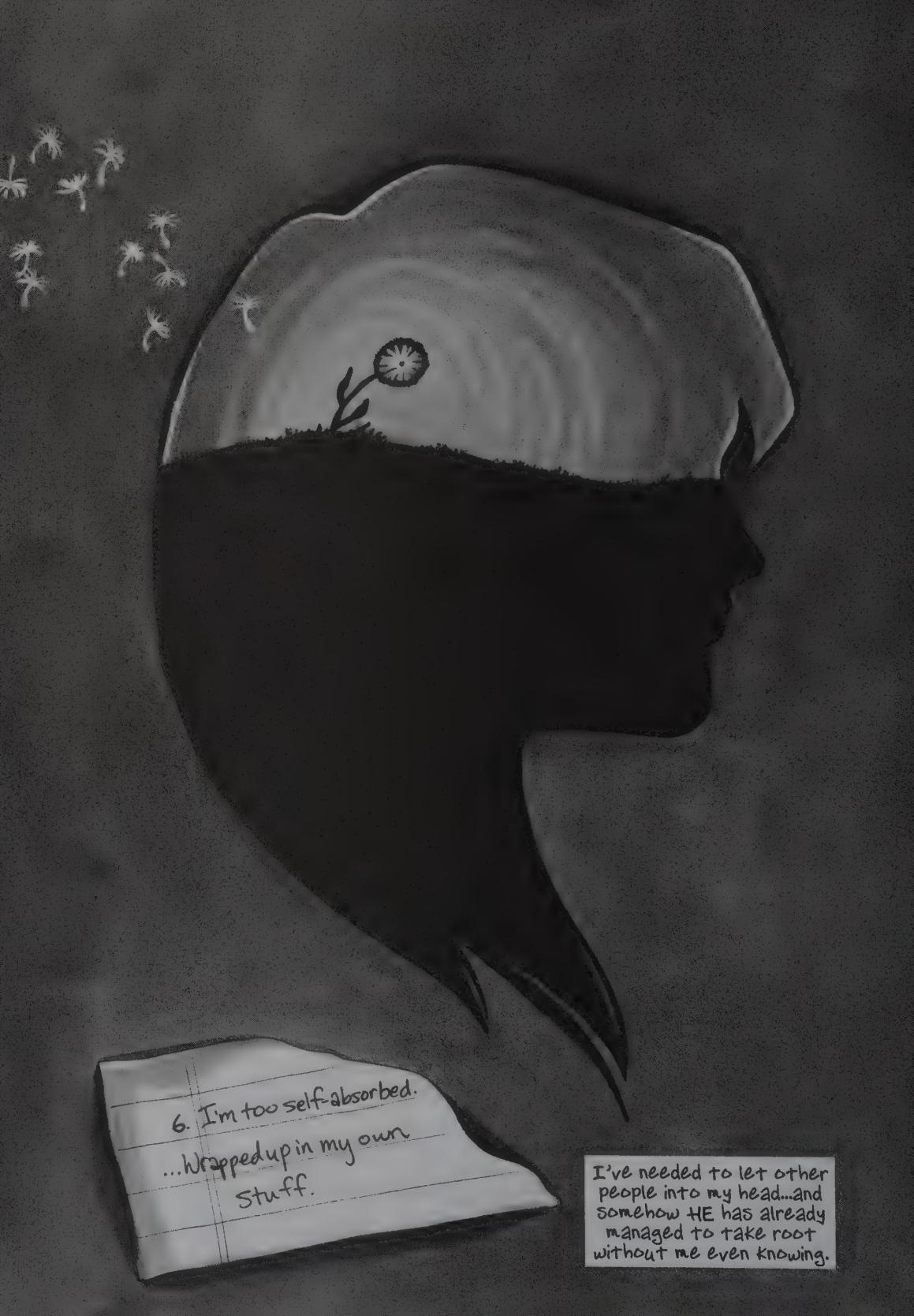




Who here actually understands me?

Who do I  
click with?  
Okay, fine...

Gabe, you online?

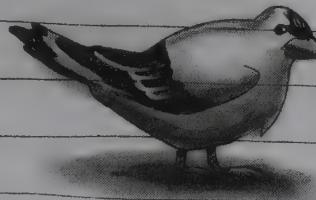


6. I'm too self-absorbed.  
...Wrapped up in my own  
Stuff.

I've needed to let other people into my head...and somehow HE has already managed to take root without me even knowing.

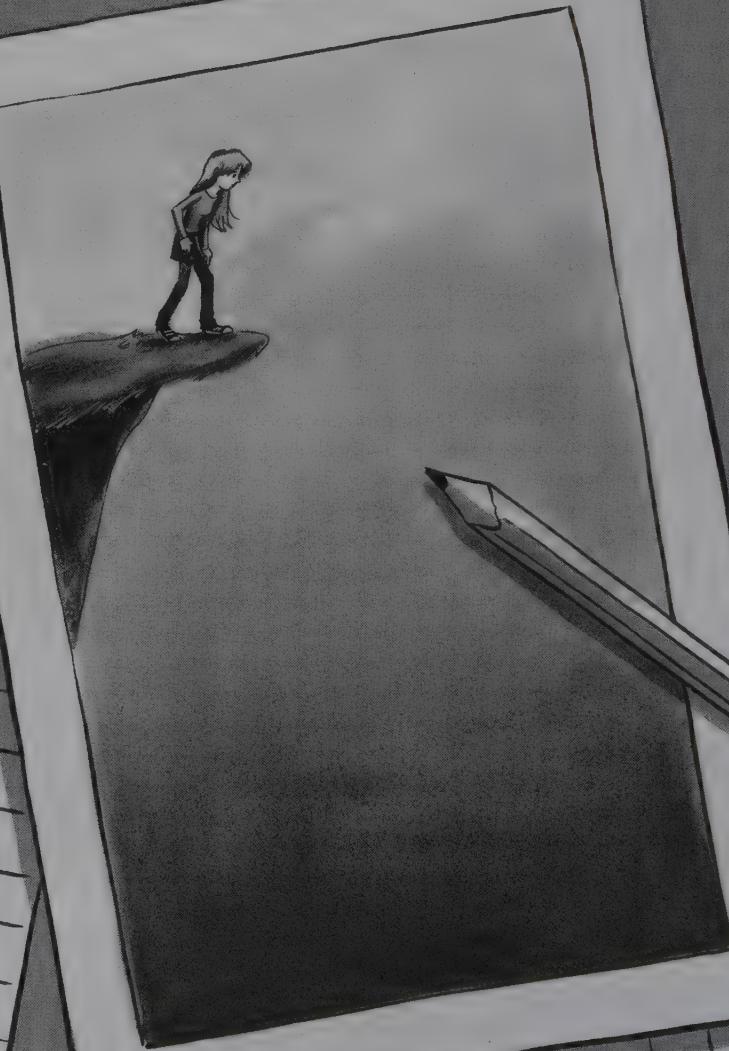
# Rule #5

Figure out what  
scares you and  
**DO IT!**

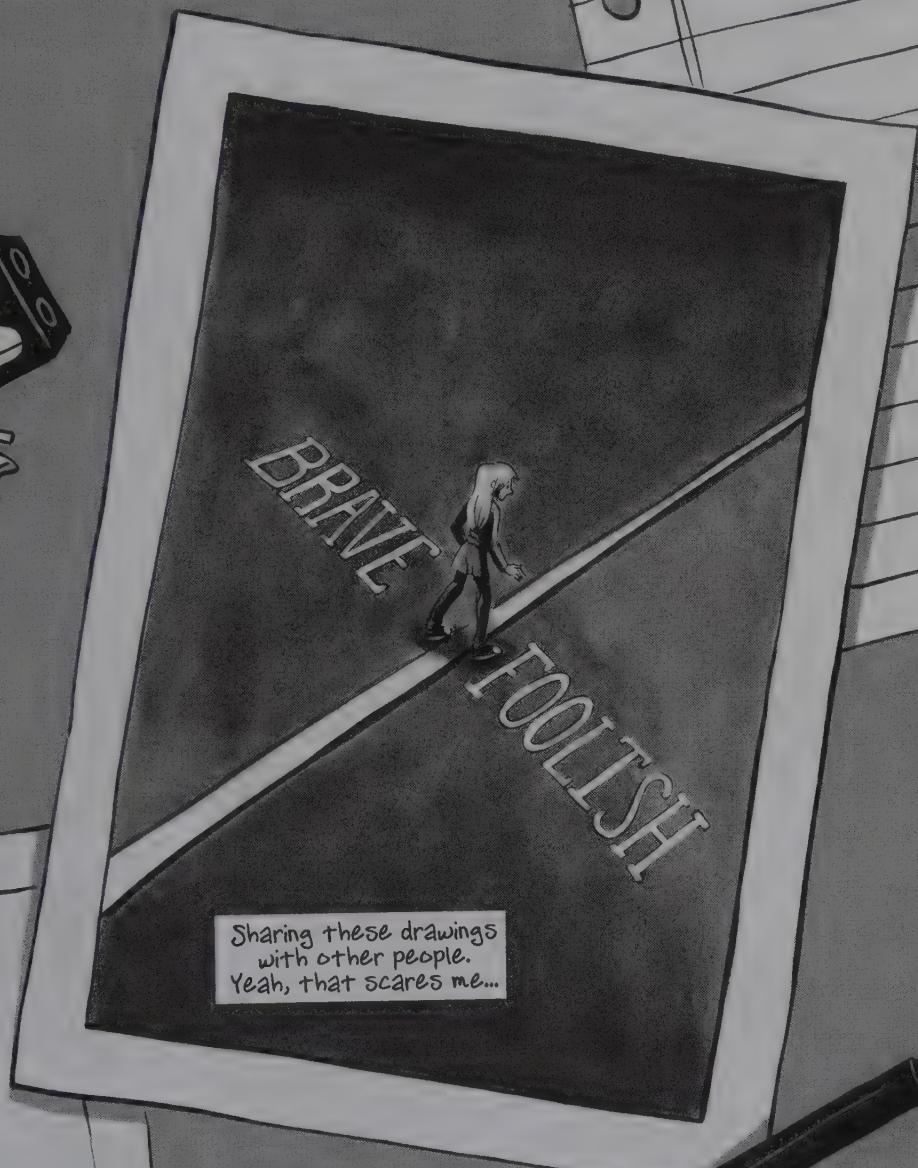


-March-

It's funny how risks on paper  
spill over into real life.  
Facing fears in my 2-D world  
helps me in my 3-D world.



So what scares me?



Sharing these drawings  
with other people.  
Yeah, that scares me...

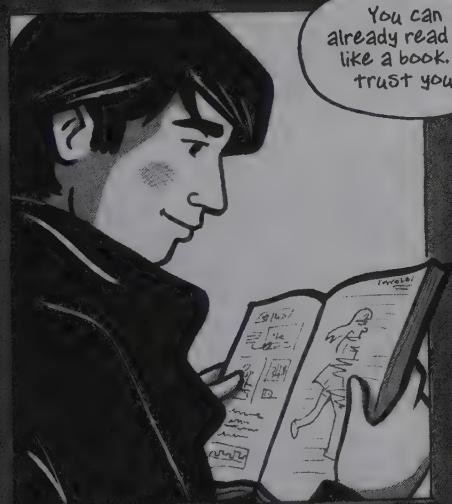


Give yourself some credit! I'm trying to give you a compliment.

It's just, you're the first person I've showed it to.



You can already read me like a book. I trust you.



But you must explain this drawing here. Is there something you're not telling me about you and Jules?

No, no...Fine...It might sorta be about...you...

What was that? You trailed off there a bit.

I hate you.

Not according to this.

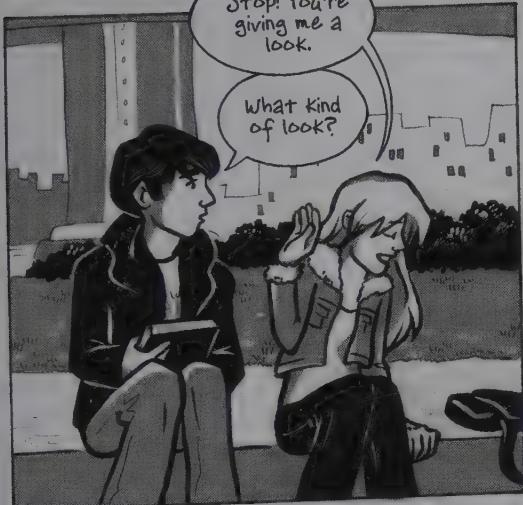
Fine. That drawing is about how you're the first person here I'm myself with. We have clickage.

Clickage?

Like LEGOS.

I'm pro-LEGOS.





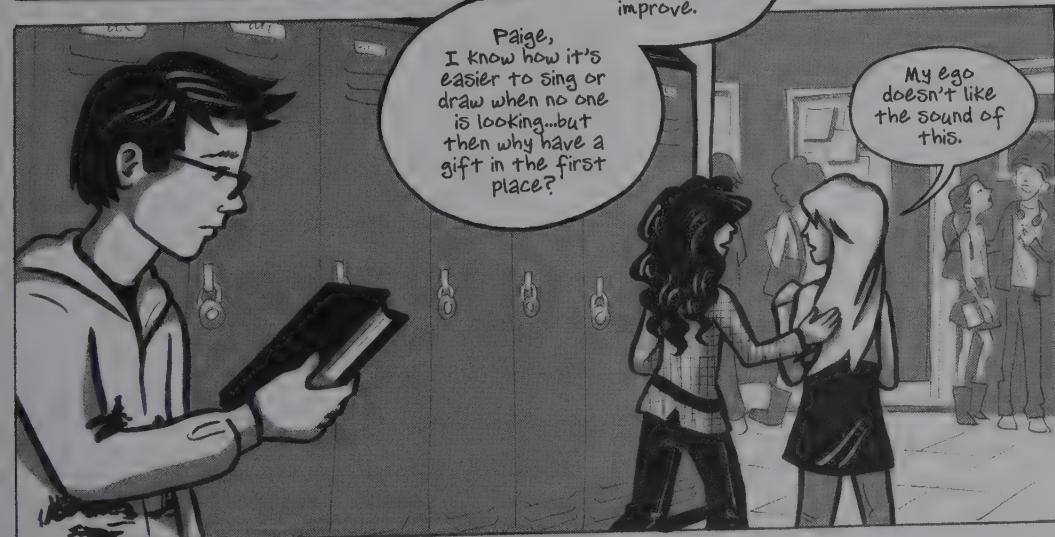
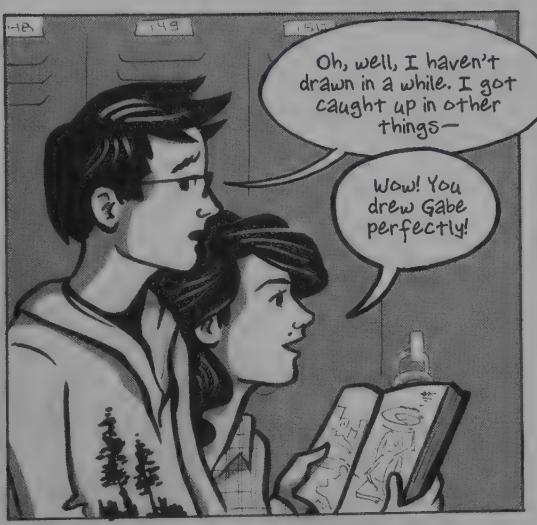


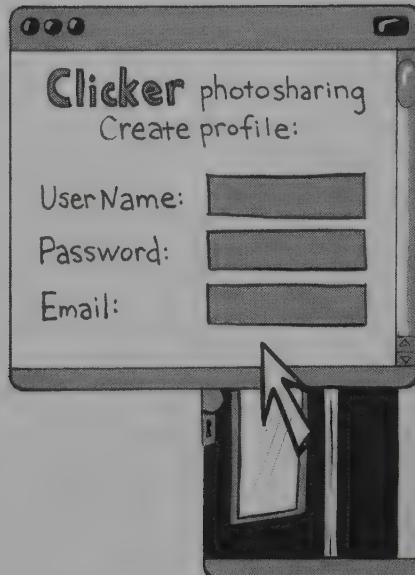
You should let Jules and Longo look at this. They're the only people I trust to read the stuff I write.



...so I started this sketchbook when I came to New York...



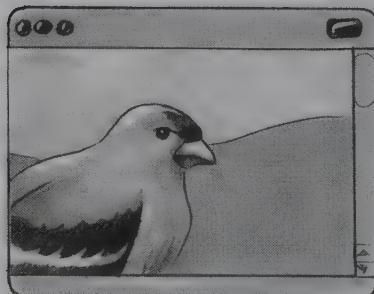
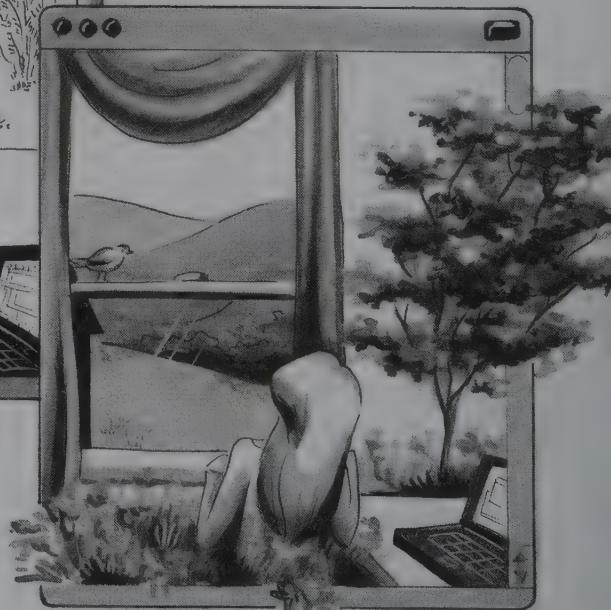




The thought of sharing my art  
terrified me...so I did it.



I need an anonymous name.  
Maybe something from home?



That's it!

Welcome to Clicker,

# FINCH

So on paper I can be who I want,  
create the world I want.

Would you like to start  
uploading your pictures

YES

SKIP

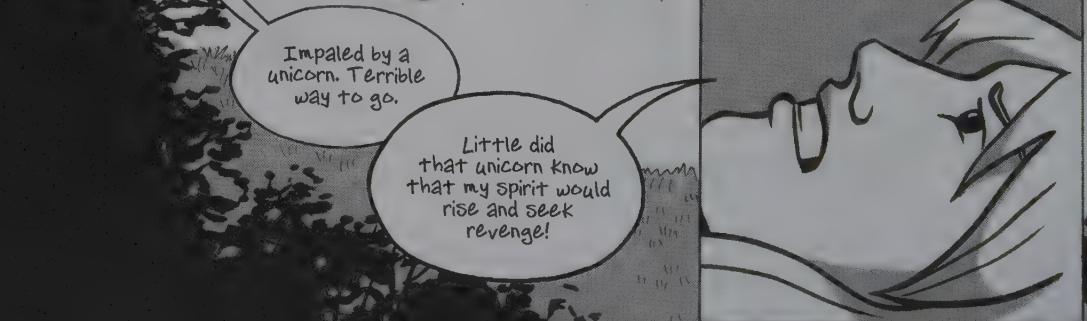


my  
Pencil  
can do  
anything



I didn't realize that sharing my art would feel so...liberating!





It looks like a  
dance party. But  
more ominous.

"Dawn of  
the Dead:  
The Musical!"

"So you think  
you can DIE!"  
Ha, ha...

That  
unicorn had it  
coming.

Come on, there  
are lots of sidewalks  
in this park that need  
tending to.





in your life.

is the most important thing

this moment, THIS STEP,

What you are doing right now,



I think our  
job here is done,  
Agent Jules.

Brought to you  
by the  
Agents of  
Whimsy

So, Paige...  
let's get to it.  
What is up with  
you and Gabe?

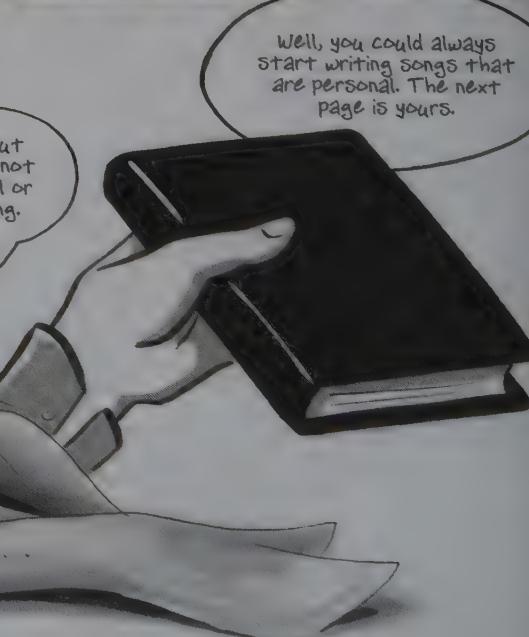
IT'S THAT  
obvious?!

Yeah, there is  
something there.  
Something good. But  
I know **NOTHING**  
about guys.

Remember who  
you're talking to? From  
my limited experience  
with men, all I can say is  
that...it's a country I  
don't want to  
revisit.

But that's  
not important.  
Gabe is fabulous,  
I think you—

Wait, what  
happened,  
Jules?



Jules  
tore this page out  
of my sketchbook

There was no other way to express her feelings, to draw

angry and swift using teeth and nails

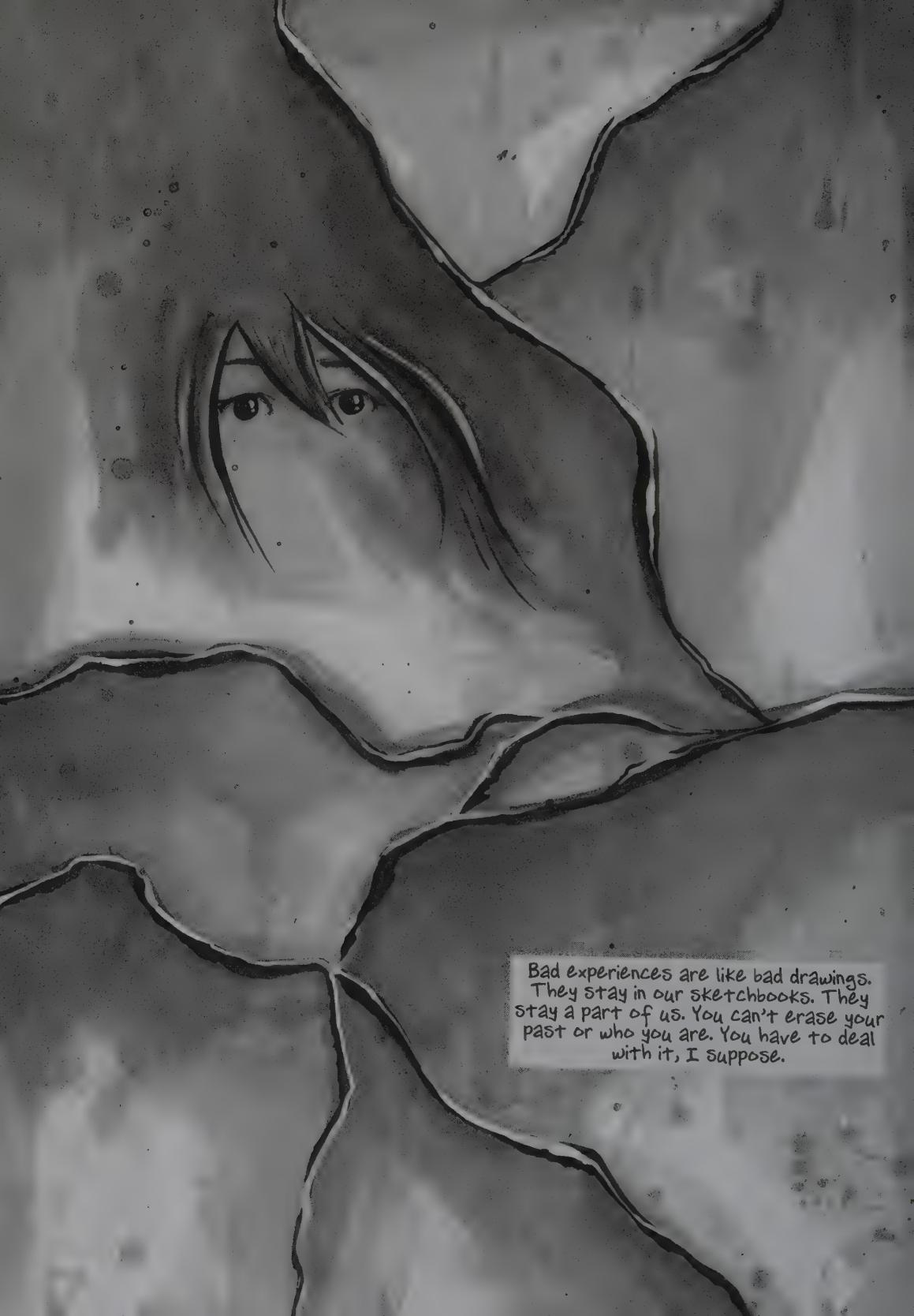
the pieces of paper were scattered on the floor

she felt better

I collected the pieces and put them back

destroy and rebuild again

together with glue



Bad experiences are like bad drawings.  
They stay in our sketchbooks. They  
stay a part of us. You can't erase your  
past or who you are. You have to deal  
with it, I suppose.

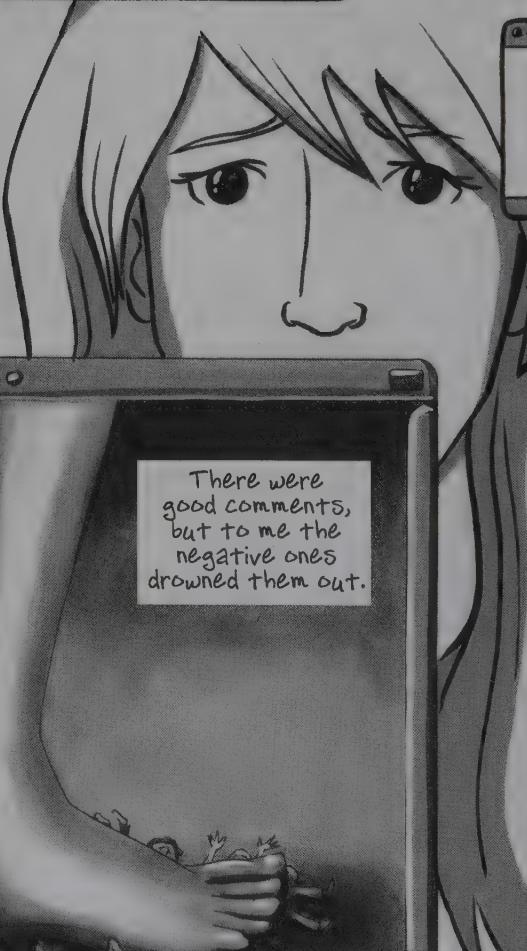
# Rule #6

KISS:

Keep  
It  
Simple,  
Stupid



- April -

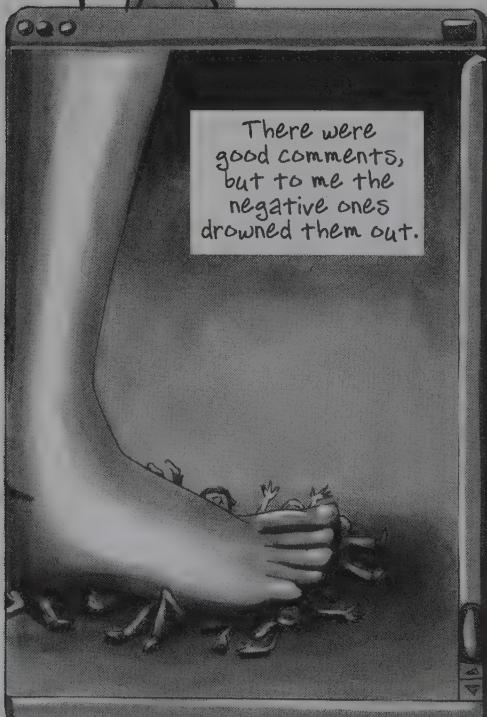


Today when I went to post some new drawings online, I started reading the comments people have been making about my stuff...

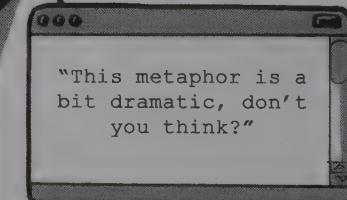


"This girl sure draws about HERSELF a lot...seems a bit conceited..."

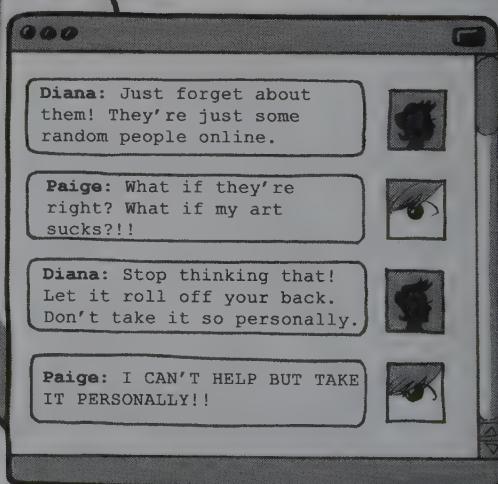
...this drawing would be better in color..."



There were good comments, but to me the negative ones drowned them out.



"This metaphor is a bit dramatic, don't you think?"

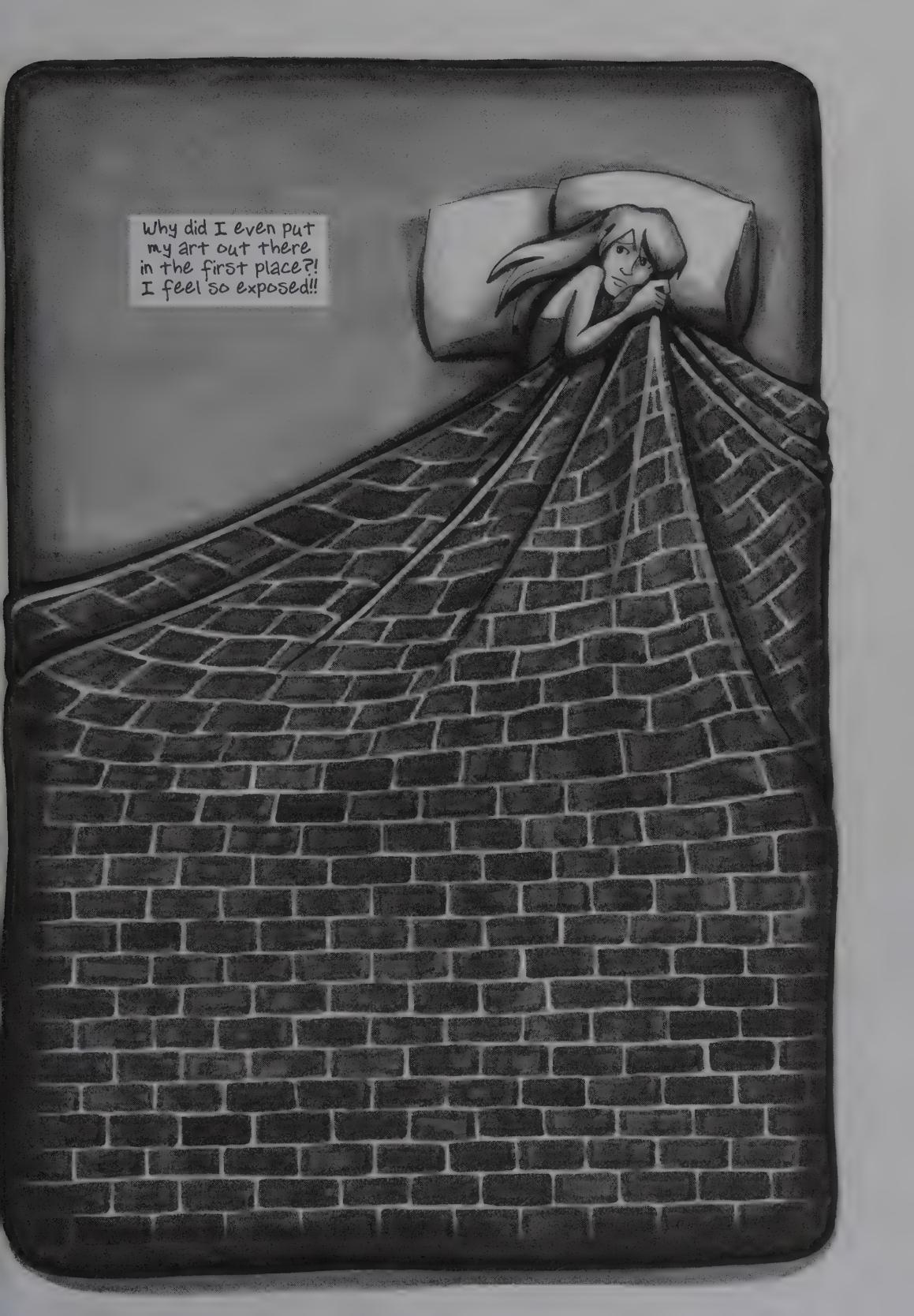


Diana: Just forget about them! They're just some random people online.

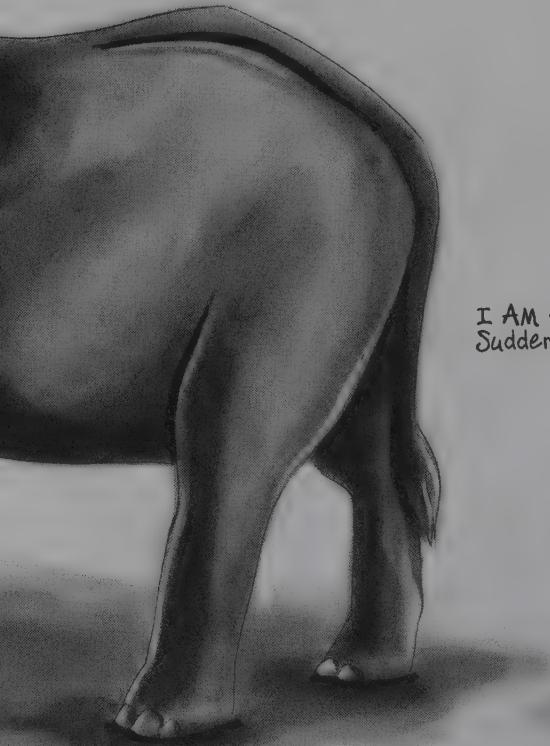
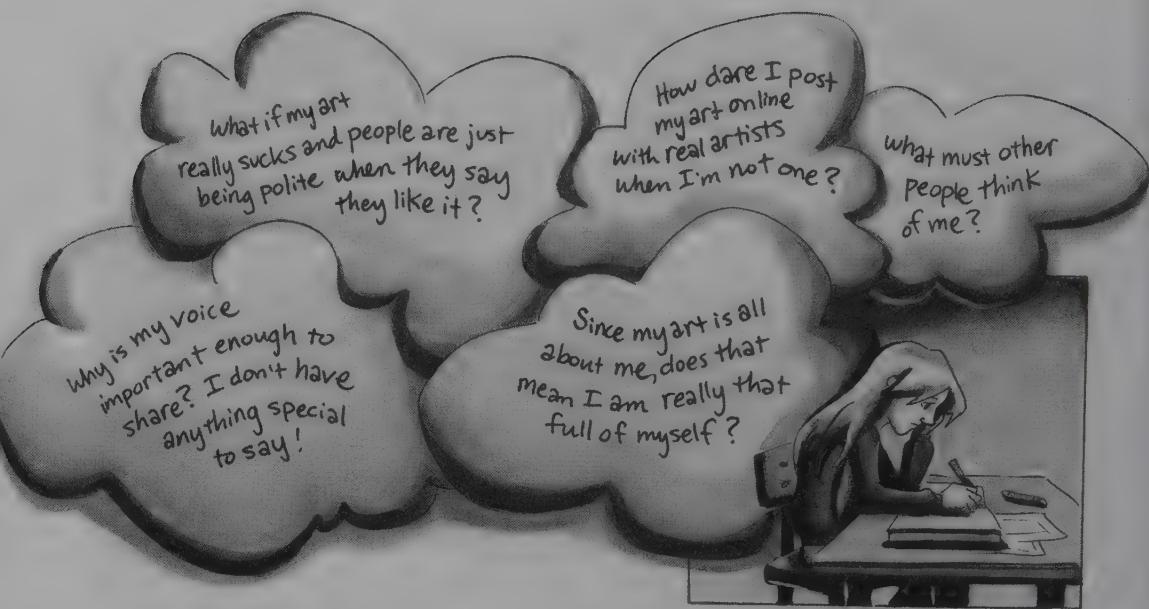
Paige: What if they're right? What if my art sucks??!

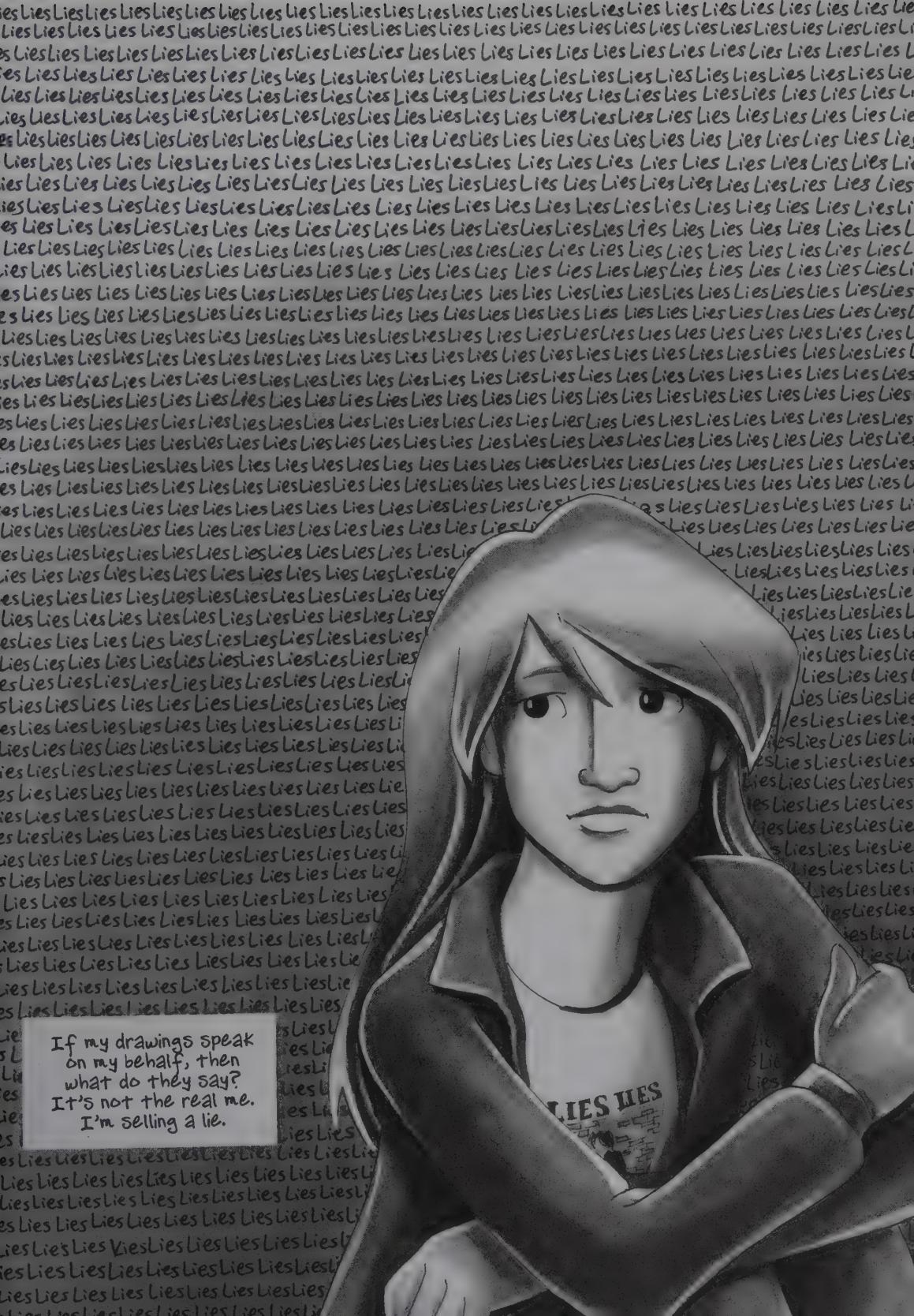
Diana: Stop thinking that! Let it roll off your back. Don't take it so personally.

Paige: I CAN'T HELP BUT TAKE IT PERSONALLY!!



Why did I even put  
my art out there  
in the first place?!  
I feel so exposed!!





If my drawings speak  
on my behalf, then  
what do they say?  
It's not the real me.  
I'm selling a lie.

I always do this. I make things more complicated than they really are.





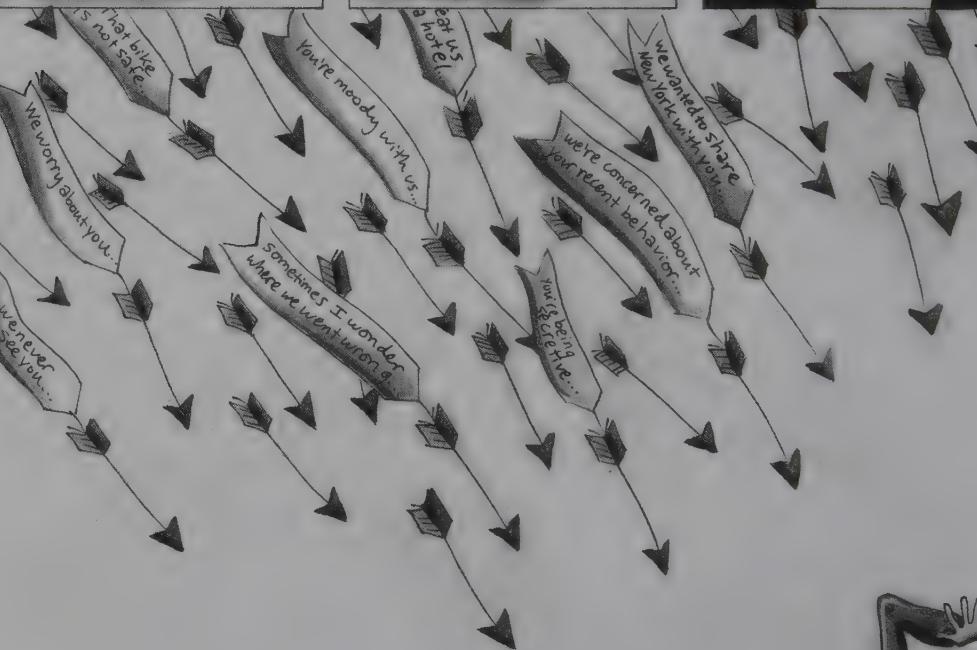
And I didn't draw for a week.



I was already  
feeling awful.

And then  
my parents  
cornered me.

WE NEED TO  
TALK TO YOU!



How can I convince  
them that deep down  
I'm the same Paige?



Great. So my art sucks.  
AND the happier I am, the  
more I disappoint my parents.  
How can I trust myself  
when no one else does?



She reminds me of...

I, well...  
here, you can  
look at it if you  
want.

You um, don't  
have to go  
through the  
whole thing...

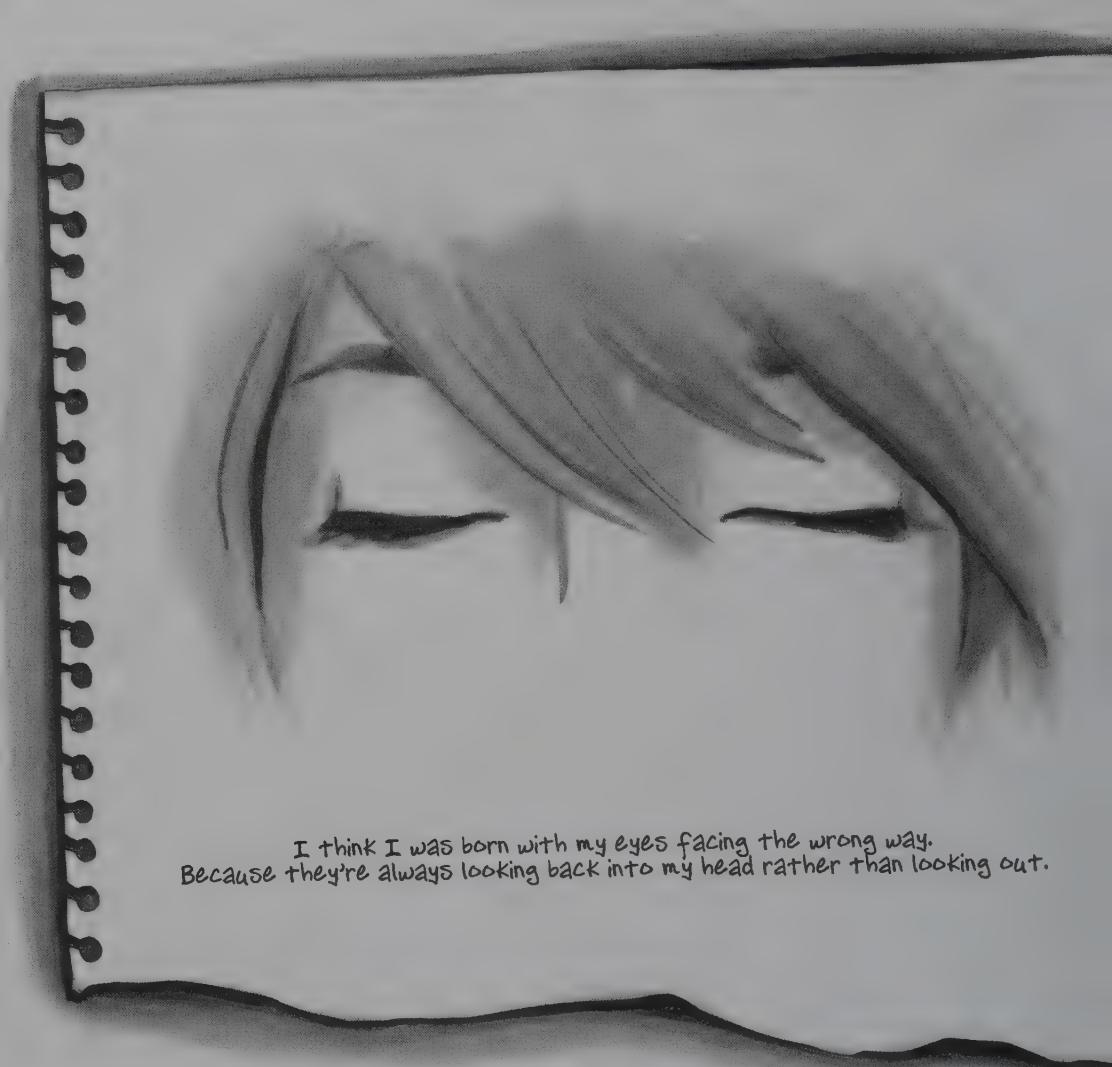
Young lady,  
you are quite  
talented.

I appreciate how  
honest you are,  
because most people  
are too scared to  
tell the truth about  
themselves.

You have  
some guts.

You are like  
a dispenser  
of truth.

Okay, so maybe  
I am self-absorbed.  
But who isn't?! When  
someone looks at one  
of my drawings, it  
reflects back THEM.  
Not me.

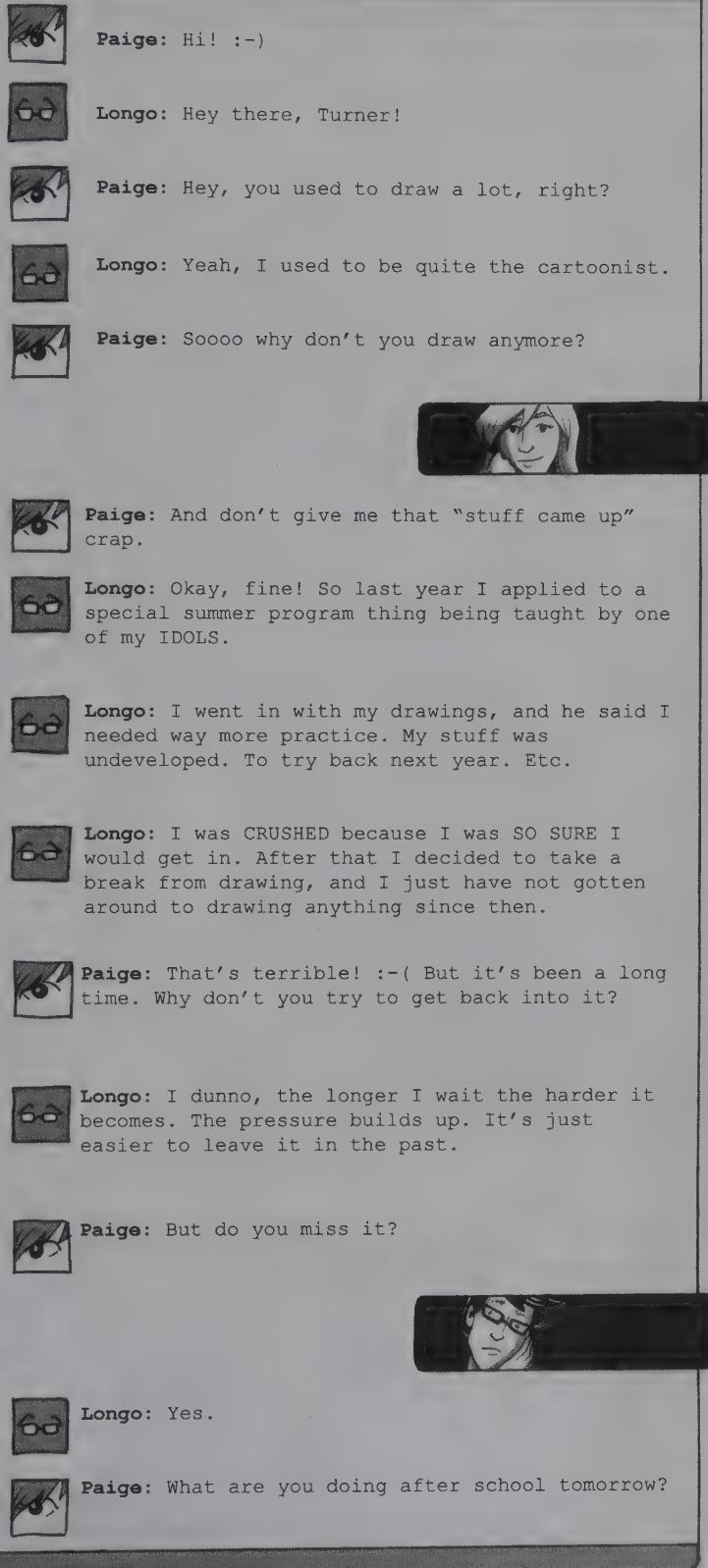


I think I was born with my eyes facing the wrong way.  
Because they're always looking back into my head rather than looking out.



If I can tap into  
something inside me,  
then I should...right??  
I shouldn't apologize.

To art or not to art?  
I have an idea who else  
understands this  
dilemma...



(Support)



(This is a drawing Longo and I made TOGETHER!)



Paige, do you  
mind if I write  
something else?

Somewhere  
between  
darkness  
and  
wonder

...is  
every  
dream

Somewhere  
between  
breaking  
and  
broken

...there's  
a song  
to sing

Somewhere  
between  
nothing  
and  
Something

...is  
everything

Thanks! And  
your portraits  
are quite...  
expressive. Yet,  
simple.

That's  
beautiful,  
Gabe. Where is  
it from?

Where?  
Uh, me. I  
wrote that.

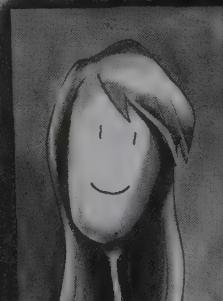
Really? Wow,  
you're quite the  
wordsmith.



I learned that  
lesson from my old  
art teacher.

I'd make  
something overly  
complicated and she'd  
write KISS on my paper:  
Keep It Simple, Stupid.

And I think  
we are simply  
done!





But wait... I don't want to go



Ride safe, Turner!

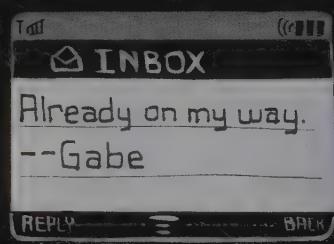
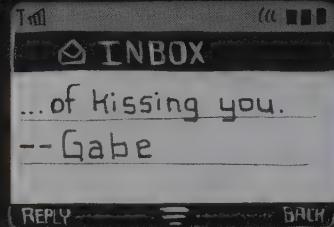
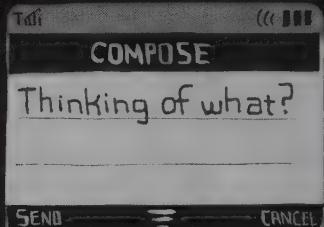
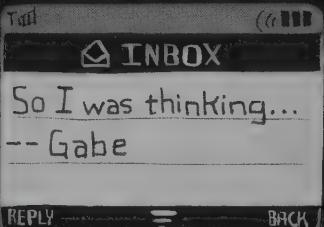
Okay, well we're walking back up this way. See you tomorrow!

Thanks...

DO SOMETHING!  
Yell! Text!  
SOMETHING!!

What would I say? "Gabe, come back!"?

Buzz Buzz





Tell me, Paige,  
what was that  
acronym you just  
told me about?

KISS. Keep  
It Simple...

...Stupid.

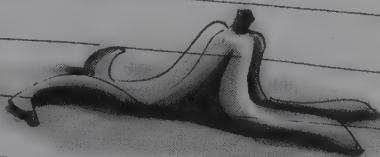




My heart didn't even write a  
farewell note...It was a goner.

# Rule #7

Live a LOT to get better  
material. Let yourself  
feel everything.



- May -

Besides sporadic hugging, my family isn't affectionate.

My parents even sleep in separate rooms. So I've always had trouble with physical contact.

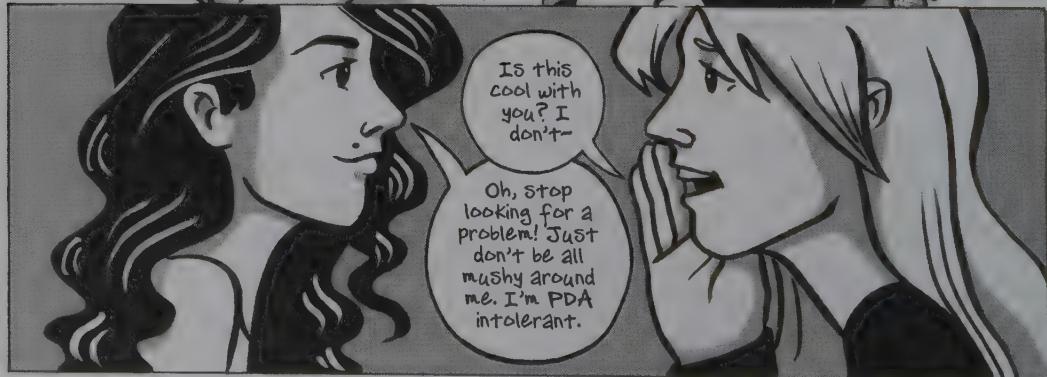


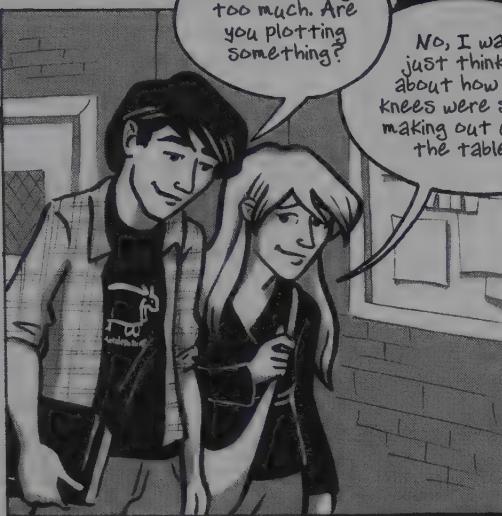
When we hug, I can feel my arms stretch around him, like I'm a long-limbed monkey...

With my mom, I'm more like a startled deer. But maybe that's because things with her are still frosty.









No, I was just thinking about how our knees were sorta making out under the table...

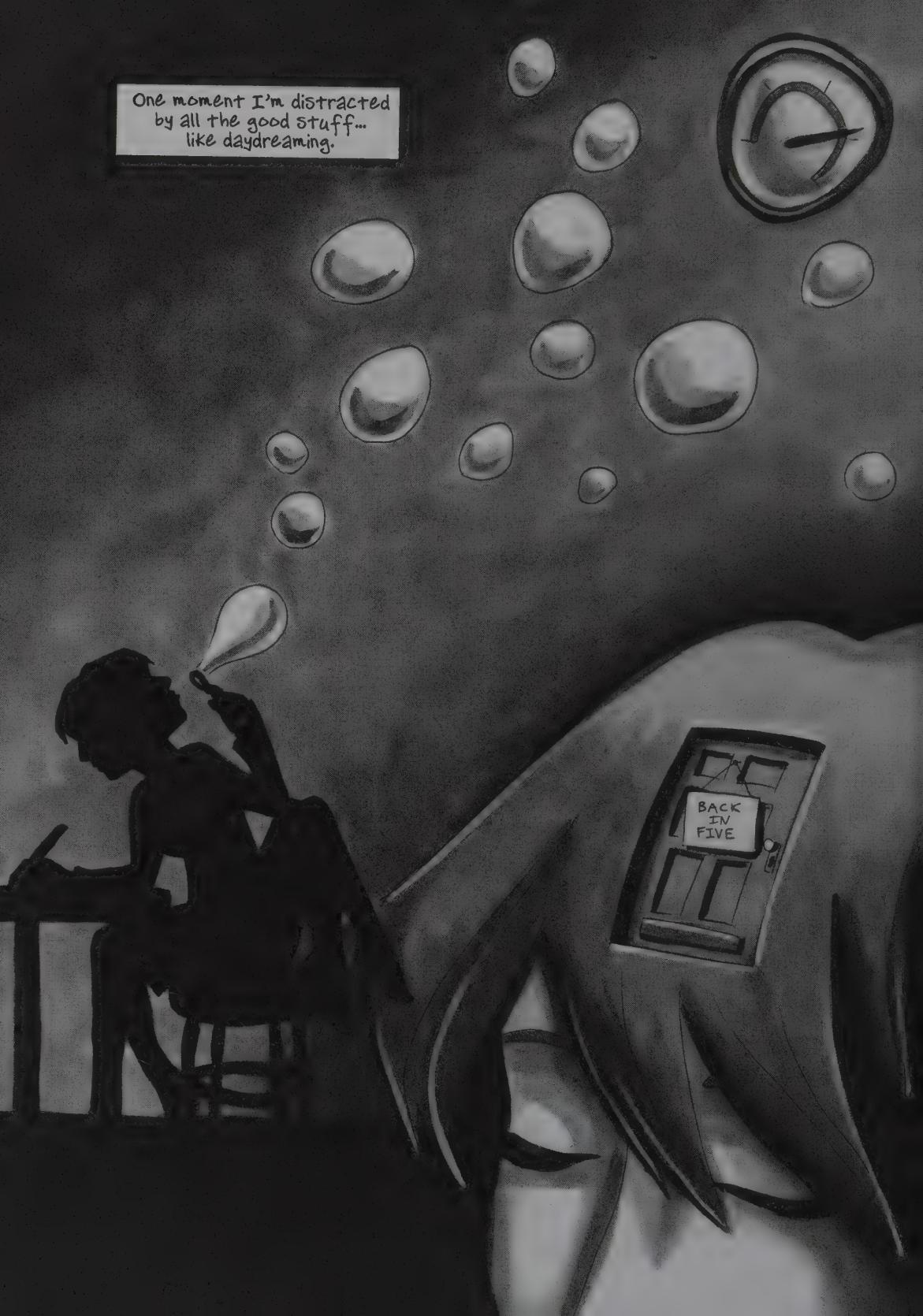


This is all so new for me.  
It's wonderful and terrifying.  
Why does he like me?  
What if things go wrong?  
What if, what if, what if...



I'm trying to let myself  
feel things instead of  
avoiding them...





One moment I'm distracted  
by all the good stuff...  
like daydreaming.

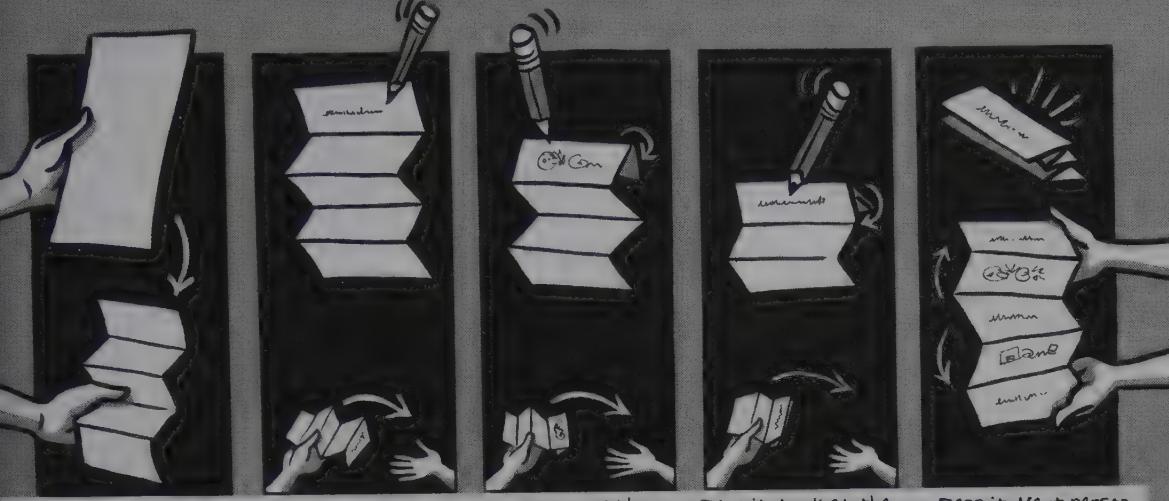


But then the next minute I'm overwhelmed with the bad stuff... like social anxiety.

In fourth period we had a sub, so Longo and I made some drawings together. It made me think of Diana, since we used to do the same thing back in Virginia.



And then we all played a game of Drawing Telephone. How do you play? Well...



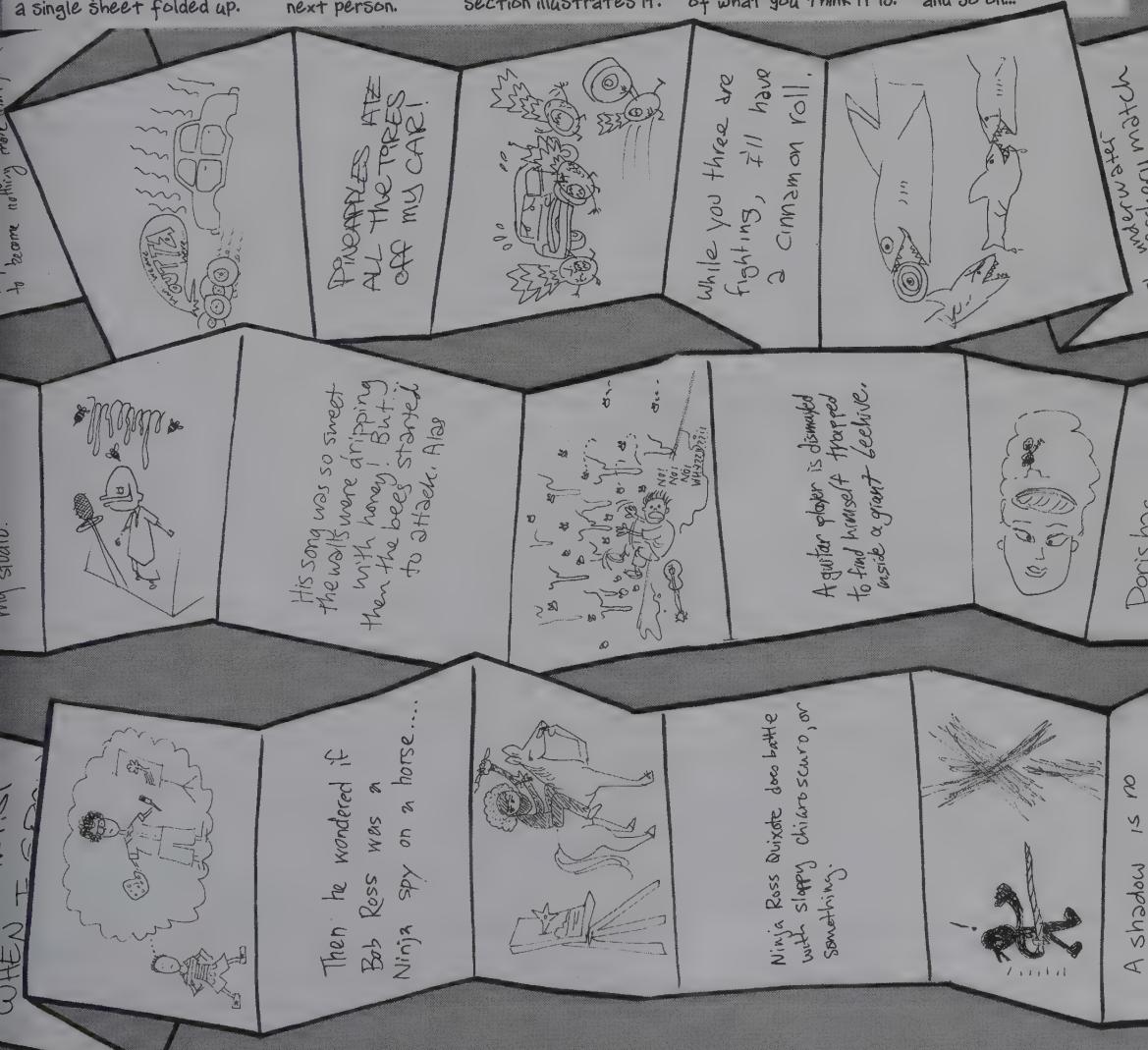
Each person needs pencil and paper. You can use a stack of loose sheets or a single sheet folded up.

Write a sentence. Any sentence! Pass it to the next person.

Next person reads the sentence, folds it back, and in the next section illustrates it.

Pass it. Look at the drawing, fold it back, and write a sentence of what you think it is.

Pass it. Next person illustrates the new sentence. And so on, and so on...



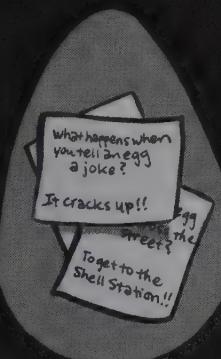
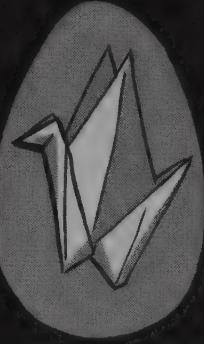
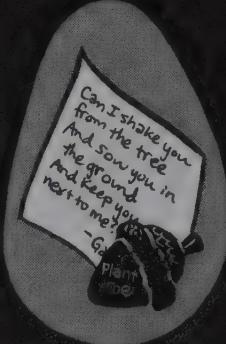
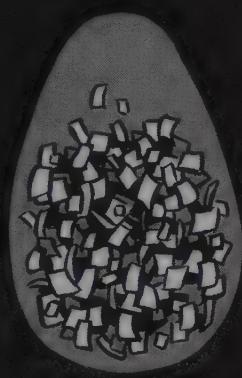


She said, "If you REALLY want to impress me, dance the chicken dance like never have before!"



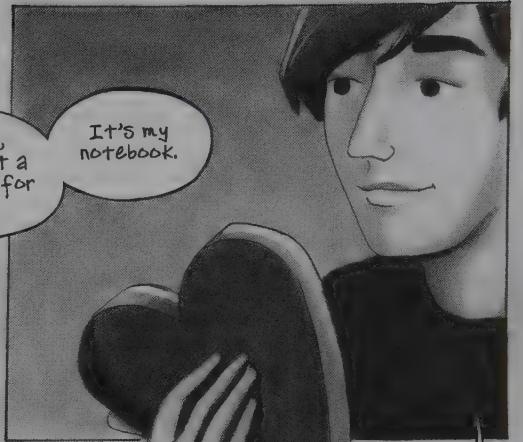
Spinning Beethoven is amazed by dancing poultry













Reading Gabe's story felt  
strange, like I was invading his  
privacy somehow. I decided to  
copy down part of it here...  
I hope he doesn't mind.

"...but our story didn't start 'Once upon a time...,'" the boy objected.

"Did, too." The old man sniffed. "But we didn't hear it, because we're lucky enough right now to be the tale, not he who tells it."

"Well, who's telling it?" the boy asked, looking around as though he expected to see a storyteller nearby.

"Maybe you, one day, to another young mind. Maybe another teller of tales readin' this, not knowin' they're in the middle of their own story."

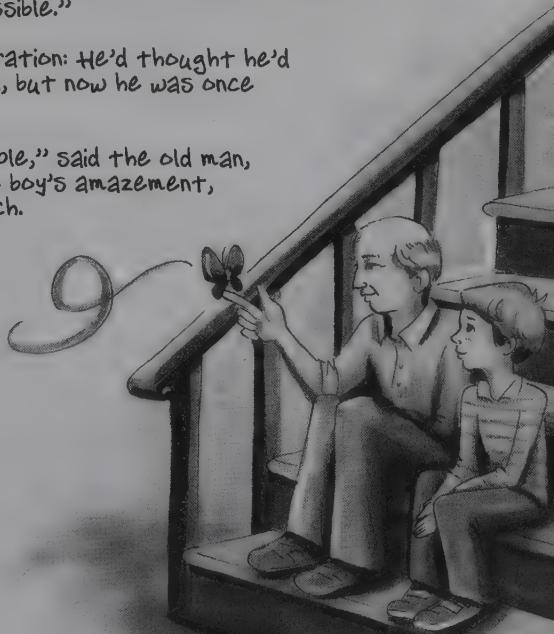
"I still don't get why stories are important," said the boy. "What's wrong with leaving happenings just being stuff that, y'know, happened?"

The old man clicked his tongue and said, "Now that is a right-thinkin' question! I'll tell you why: Tellin' stories makes us impossible."

The boy threw his hands up in the air in exasperation: he'd thought he'd been on the edge of understanding the old man, but now he was once again adrift in seeming contradictions.

"Take Mister Flutterbye, if you need an example," said the old man, extending a finger like a gnarled branch. To the boy's amazement, a butterfly came to rest on the offered perch.

"Mister Flutterbye, to your eyes, is just a bug, ain't he?" The old man didn't wait for confirmation. "But for all you know, he could have a wife and kids back home, an' you pinchin' his wings there could have ended up deprivin' 'em of a husband an' a father, couldn't it? Unlikely, I know, but it all depends on the kind of story. As another for instance, while this little fella here is flappin' those wings of his, he could be causin' a hurricane on the other side of the world."



"Now you really are making things up."

"No I ain't. That's a kind of magic your little friend Tommy could take a lifetime and never understand, too. This world ain't about how big you are, or how little."

"It's about how every little thing touches every other thing in creation. But if you don't like that, how about we look at you?"

"Me?"

"Yup, you. Ain't nothin' in the world more impossible than a little boy."

"What do you mean?" The boy had never thought of himself as...well, as anything more complicated than a little boy.

"Little boys are like doors into the impossible. Like when you're playin' games. When you're playin' a game of make-believe, are you still you? Or are you a spy? Or a cowboy? Or a knight? Who are you when you're playin' those games? You're tellin' another story."

The old man waved his hand, dismissing the butterfly the way someone else would dismiss a misunderstanding. "It ain't even just when you're playin', either." He pointed his gnarled finger at the boy.

"Every little boy is his mother's little angel, and his father's reflection. And because all little boys are a little bit wild, they all have a bit of the jungle in 'em behind the eyes...every little boy is a tiger. An' every little boy is someone's shadow, and a hundred other things besides, because every little boy—heck, every child—is a door into the impossible."



"And what are you, then? Are you lots of things, too?"

The old man chuckled, and the boy felt a warm glow of pride in his chest; he was only favored with that laugh when he had impressed the old man with his understanding.

"Old men ain't nothin' except old men. Old men is what you kids become when you've stopped being everything else. An' I'll tell you somethin', my boy, bein' an old man is the one thing you don't get to choose..."

I like the idea that people are made up of different things...so I wondered what would make up Gabe.

### Gabe Recipe

To make one Gabe you will need:

- \*Six feet of organic-grown, grade-A, fair-trade, FDA-approved sincerity
- \*Two cups of mixed notes, theories, and quiet observations
- \*Three heaping spoonfuls of X-ray vision
- \*One fresh heart, still on the sleeve
- \*Two tablespoons of Paige fluency

Blend together all the above ingredients in a tub of Play-Doh, then dispense through a fun factory.

Garnish with prose and shenanigans to taste.



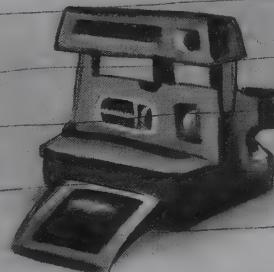


I used to feel bad asking for help because it felt so one-sided...

...but perhaps we both can help (even inspire ?) each other.

## Rule #8

Stay stimulated  
to avoid creative  
constipation.



-June-

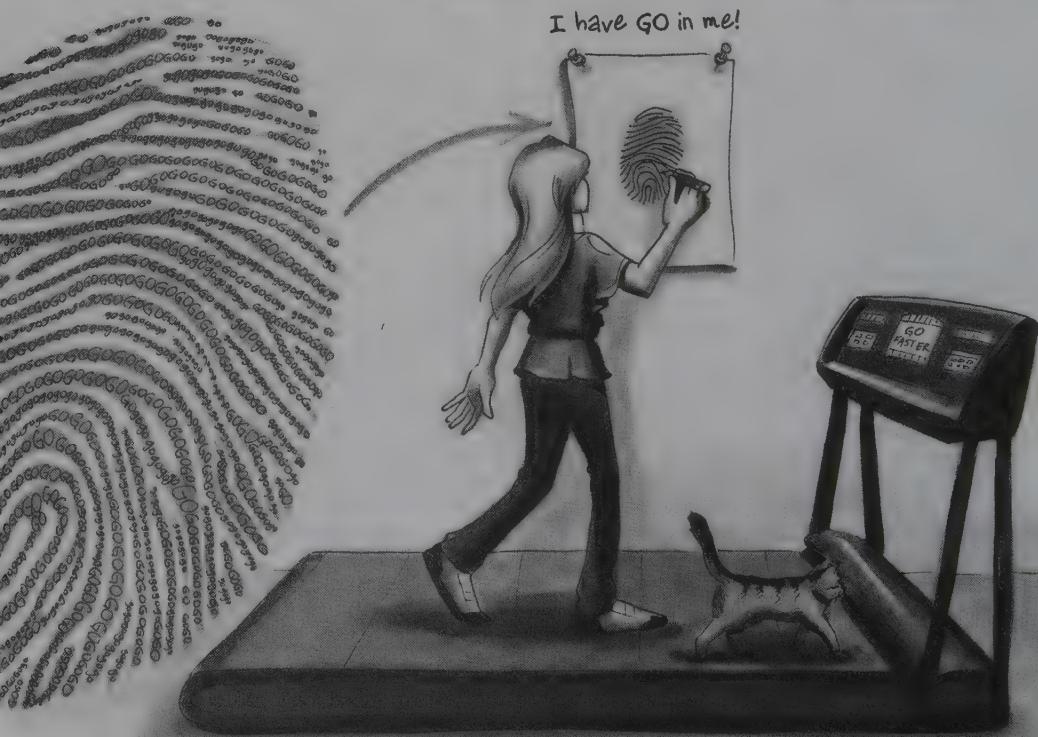
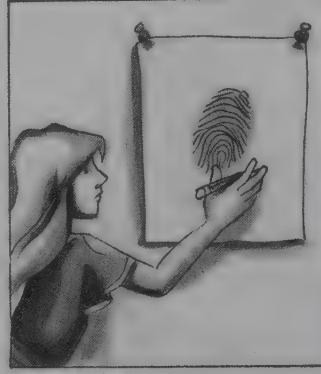
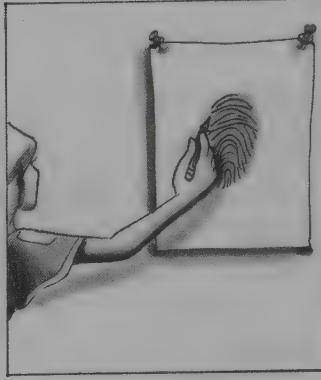
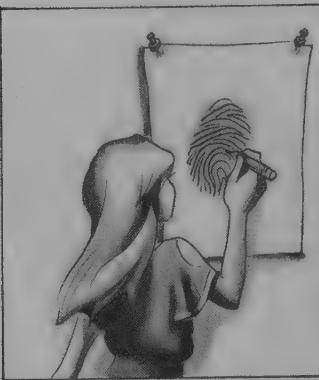
I've been playing in the same dollhouse my whole life, and I've only just NOW started adding new rooms, exploring new scenes and subcultures. Jules calls this "reality surfing."



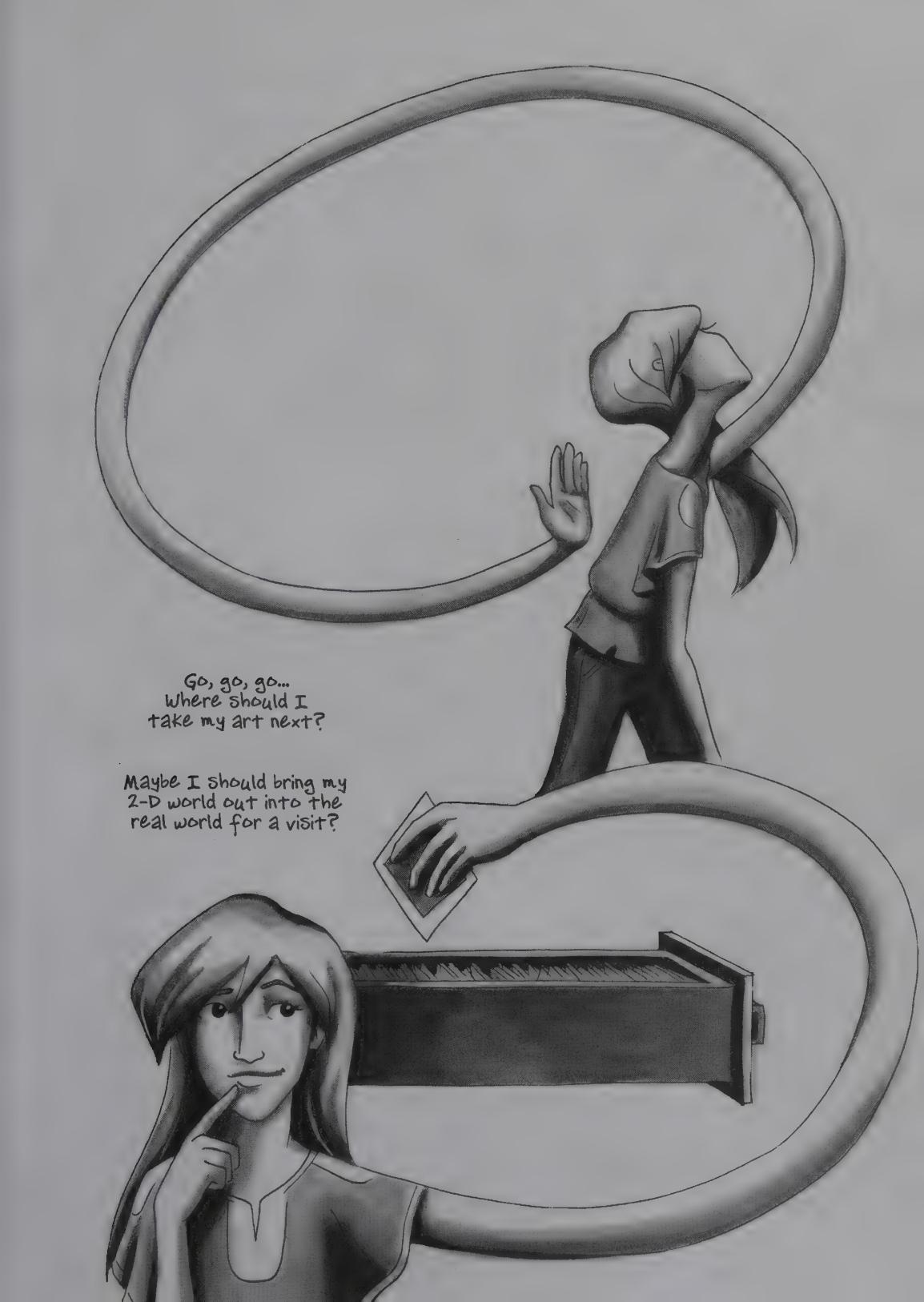


New York is a good place for this...

...so much to see, to explore, to inspire!

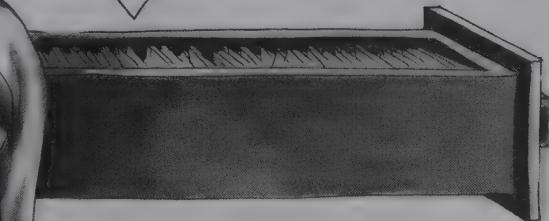


This is yet another thing I inherited from my mom, who also has trouble sitting still.

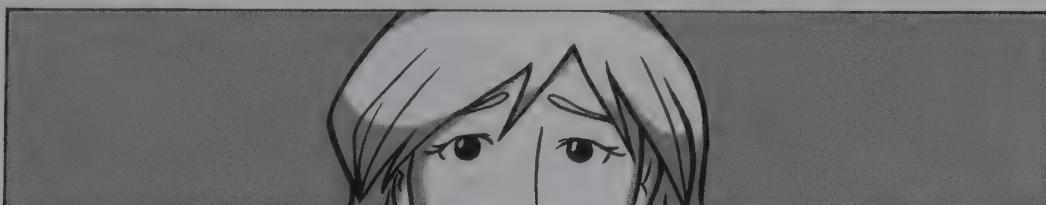
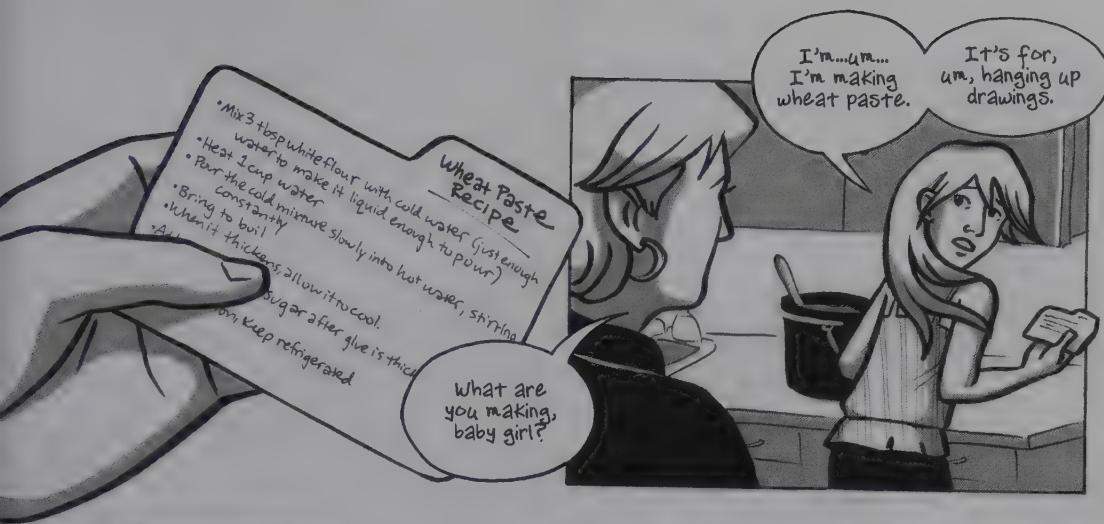


Go, go, go...  
Where should I  
take my art next?

Maybe I should bring my  
2-D world out into the  
real world for a visit?







Dogwoods...  
Why, these look  
like the ones we  
had back in  
our yard.

I wanted to  
share my favorite  
thing from the  
mountains. I miss all  
those trees...

These are  
really beautiful  
drawings, Paige.

But you're sixteen.  
And it's illegal. And I  
don't like the idea of  
you on the streets  
late at night, alone—

Oh, I  
wouldn't  
be alone!

Gabe, Jules,  
and Longo are  
going with me!

And we're going  
to this building that's,  
like, a street art  
gallery; the owners  
don't mind.

And actually, it's  
best not to hang  
art really late,  
because you stand  
out MORE.

Sounds like  
you've done  
your research.

You know,  
I might have changed on  
the surface a bit, but  
I'm the same over-  
organized Paige I always  
was. Now I just have  
bigger ideas...

Your parents  
APPROVED?!

Only after a  
LOT of convincing.  
And rational arguments.  
And I played the "I've  
always had my head on  
straight" card.

Where'd you  
learn to make  
this paste  
stuff?

YouTube.

Okay, Crow,  
you're my  
assistant.

Canary and  
Sparrow,  
you're the  
lookouts.

And what's  
your code  
name?

I'm Finch, you  
dodo. Okay, so if you  
see someone, just do  
a birdcall. That's  
our signal.

That's me, the  
trusty sidekick...





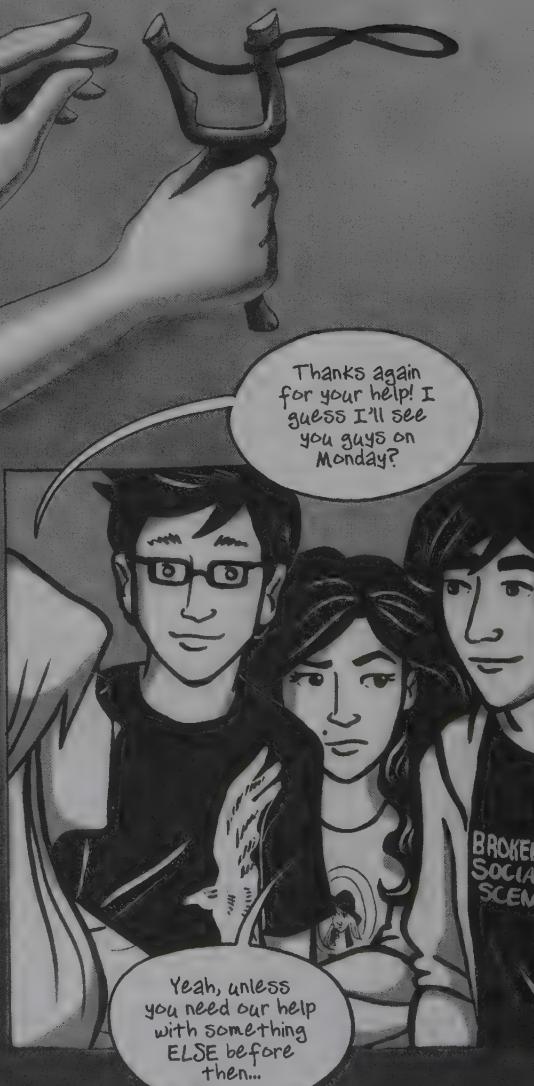
Some people help the world  
by planting real trees...  
I plant drawn ones.



In my mind, we live up  
to our feathery code  
names. We won't  
apologize for being birds!



Right when I was starting to fly really high... I get brought back down to earth.



Okay, so you know I love the stuff we've been doing.

And how you've been helping Longo get back into his art. And your awkward charm.

But...



How about we work on this together? Girl date?

Sounds...good. What did you have in mind?

Sweaty ham, no thank you.

You know I'm a veggie, right?



"Sweaty Ham, No Thank You"

Cool ranch chips, macaroni and cheese,  
deviled eggs, you know what I need.  
I've got a ham and cheddar wrapped  
all nice and tight;  
A little mayonnaise is gonna treat me right.

Oh no, it's getting hot today.  
Oh no, my lunch is going to melt away.

I can tell from here that warm  
cheddar won't do.  
One thing to say...Sweaty ham, no thank you.

I need a Styrofoam cooler, a big bag of ice,  
that would have been enough to keep  
my sandwich nice.  
Brown bag lunching is down for today,  
how about a seven-layer guacamole-ay?

Oh no, it's getting hot today.  
Oh no, my lunch is going to melt away.

I can tell from here that warm  
cheddar won't do.  
One thing to say...Sweaty ham, no thank you.

...then if you scoot  
the stencil down and  
spray, you get a nice  
drop shadow.

I helped Jules  
out with new song  
lyrics. And I came up  
with a design for her  
to stencil on album  
sleeves and other  
swag...

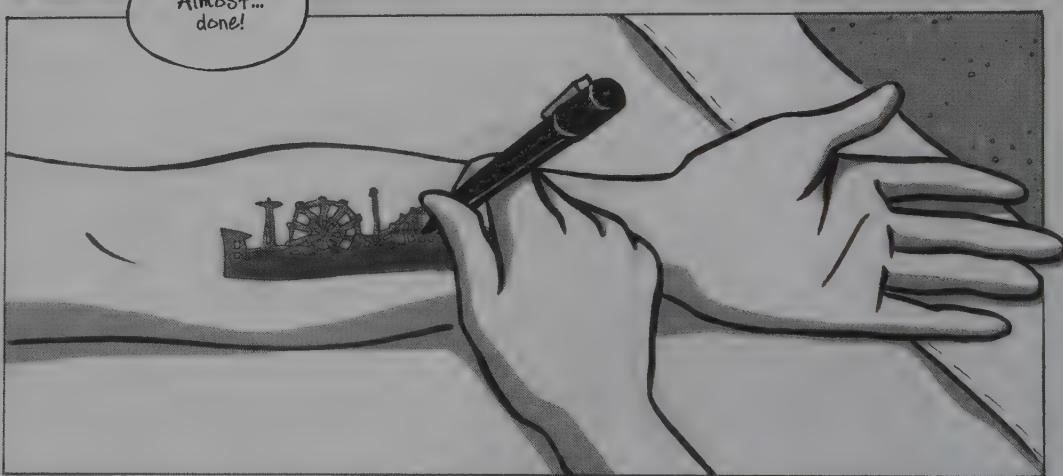
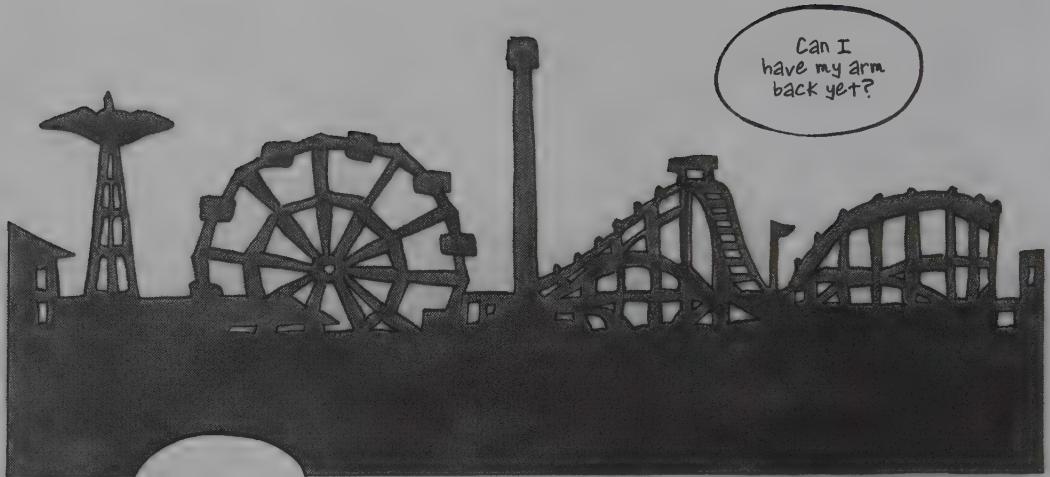


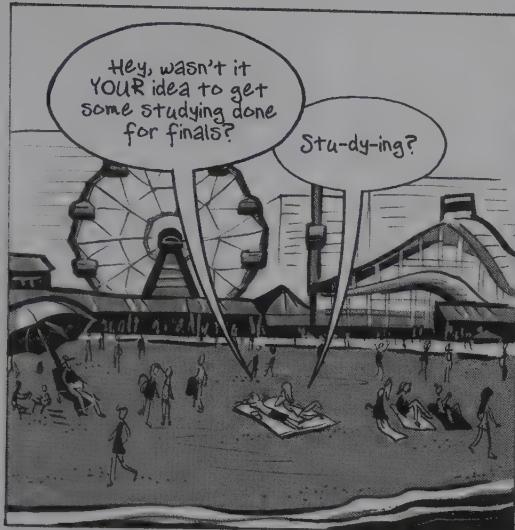
Look, now  
you'll be on my  
sketchbook!

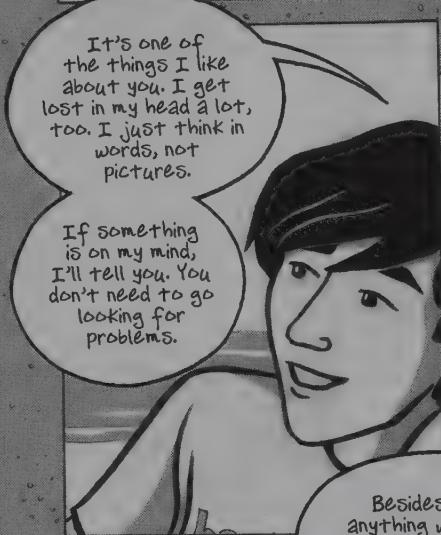
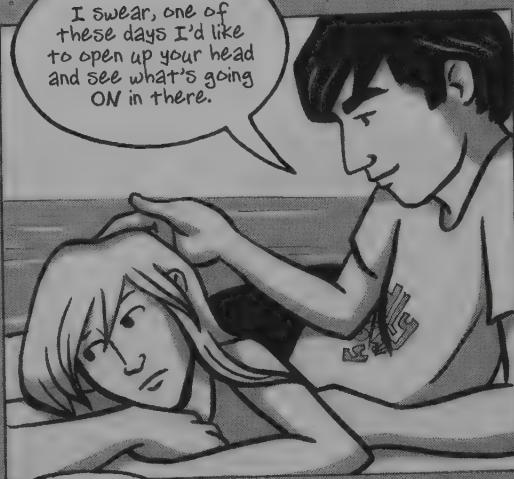
I hope Longo  
doesn't mind that  
we decorated this  
for him...







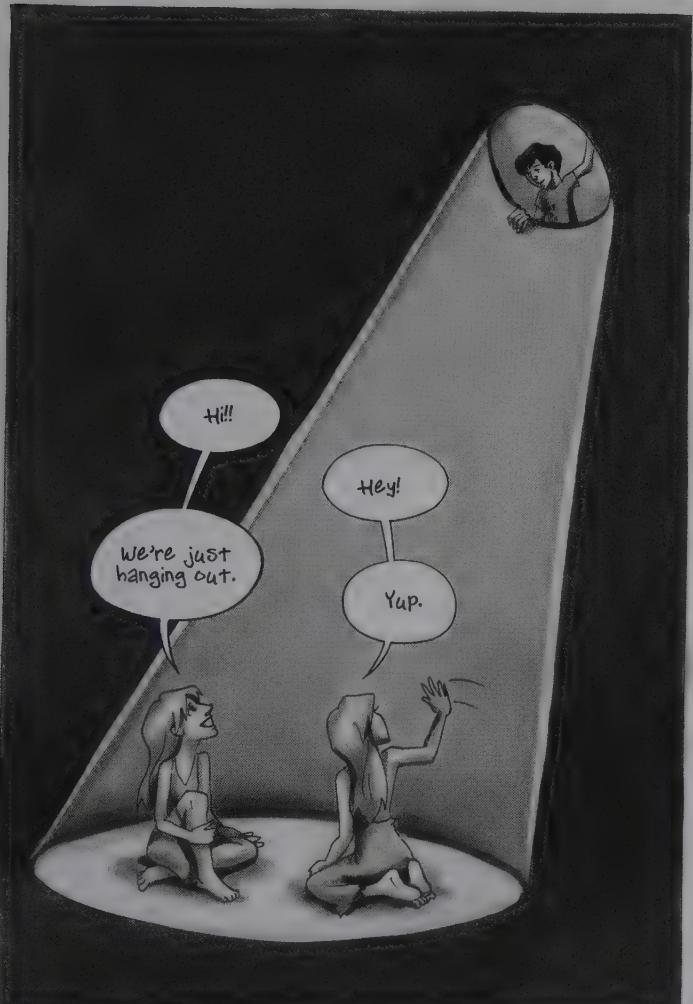




\*Wookie noise



So, Gabe, you  
want to see what's  
going on inside my  
head? I'll show  
you...



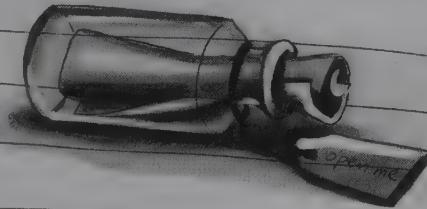


See? That's  
what's going on in my  
head. I'm just hanging  
out. With me.  
Playing.

Fishing for  
possibilities.

## Rule #9

Trust your gut  
instinct. Be honest with  
yourself.



-July-

I've always been worried about doing the **RIGHT** thing instead of following my gut. But all those wrong things also helped get me to where I am right now.



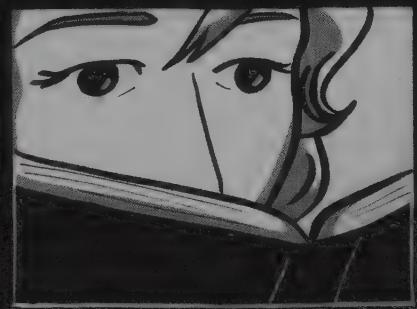
And I like all the hats I'm wearing now: explorer, creator, cycler, coconspirator, vandal, hand-holder...If I try to take out the mistakes, then this all would fall apart.





And what is my gut telling me now?  
To take the plunge and trust myself.

It's time to find  
out if I can swim...

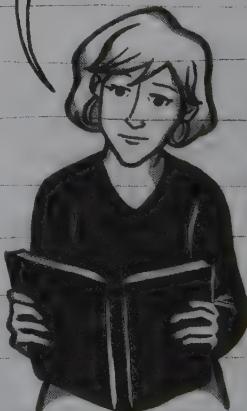


Watching her looking at my drawings, I felt so transparent. Paper-thin.

You've been working on this for months...Why did you keep it a secret?

For a while I didn't share it with anyone. Just fear, I guess.

But eventually I started showing it to Jules, Gabe, and Longo...



I could never talk to my mom about things...and I really hoped you and I would be different.

I'm showing you now, aren't I?

You know, Paige, I don't expect you to be perfect.

Well, that's what it feels like...

Growing up, my family was always poor and I was really self-conscious about what others thought of us.

That's why I decided to be different with my family. I wanted a stable, organized household. I know I can be a bit of a perfectionist-

Mom, you use the edge of an index card when you sign your name so it's in a straight line.

But this is just how I'm wired, Paige.

I hate to admit it, but we are similar. I can't accept my faults if I can't accept hers...

I know, I'm sorry. But you have to let ME start controlling my life.

So you expect me to just stand back and watch you struggle?

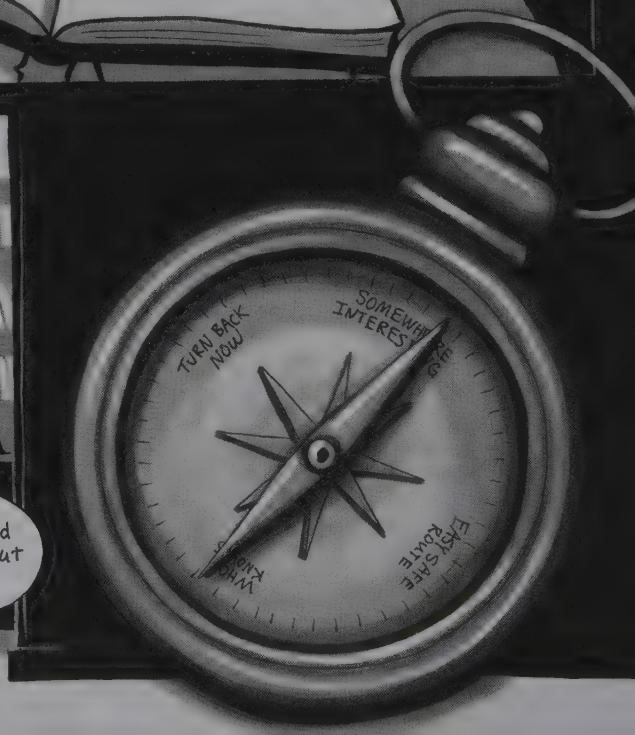
That sort of fearless drive reminds me of your grandmother...

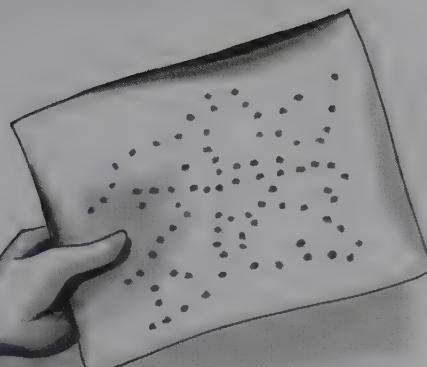
Yes.



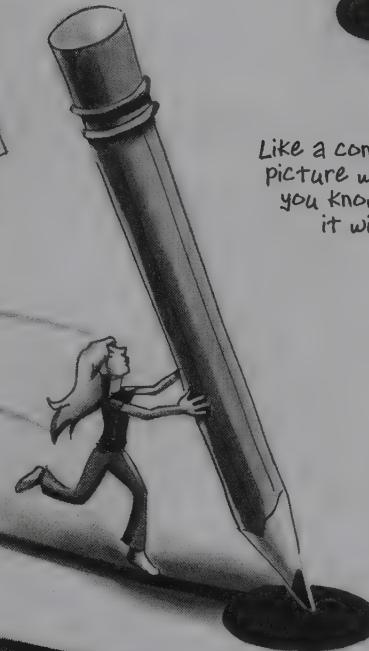
Well...if your instinct told you to open up to me, then I think I can trust it, too.

Rule #9  
Trust your gut instinct  
Be honest with yourself

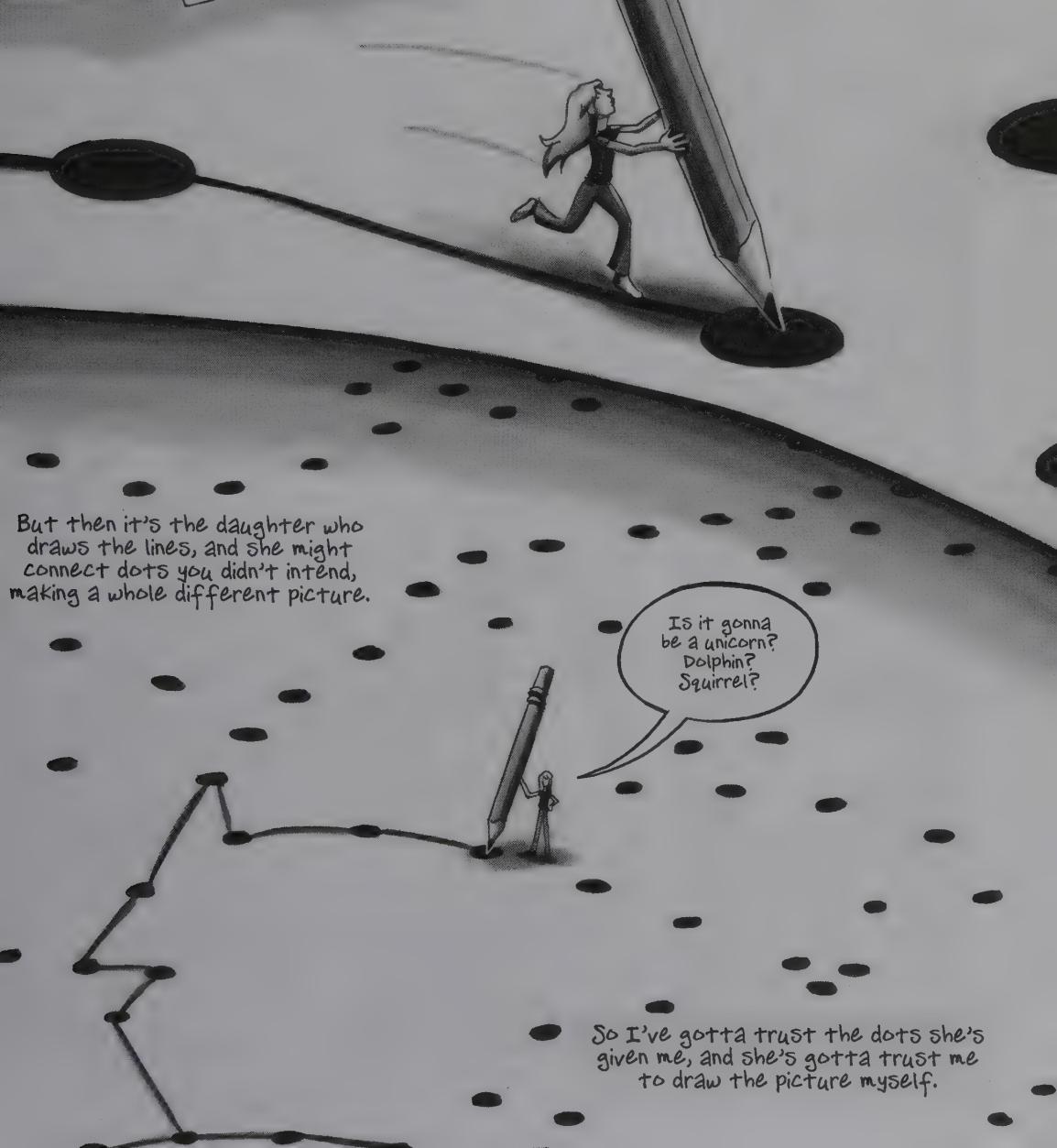




I suppose all moms have  
an idea who they HOPE  
their daughters will be.



Like a connect-the-dots  
picture where you think  
you know what shape  
it will become.



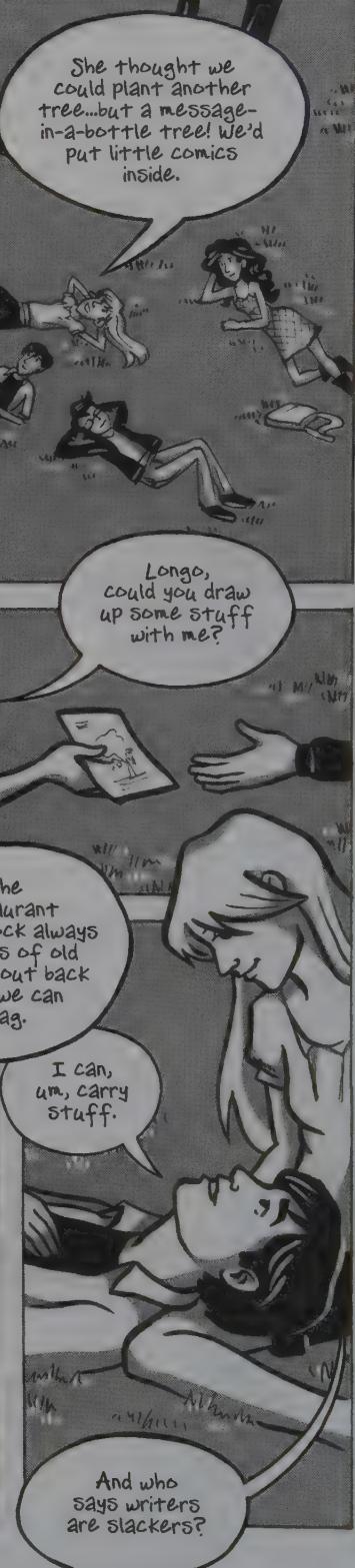
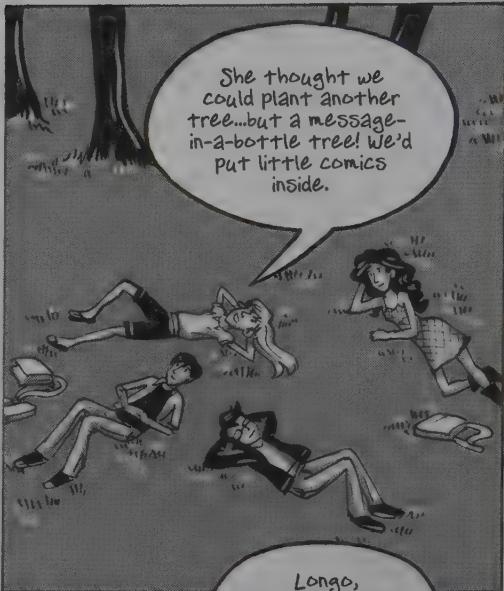
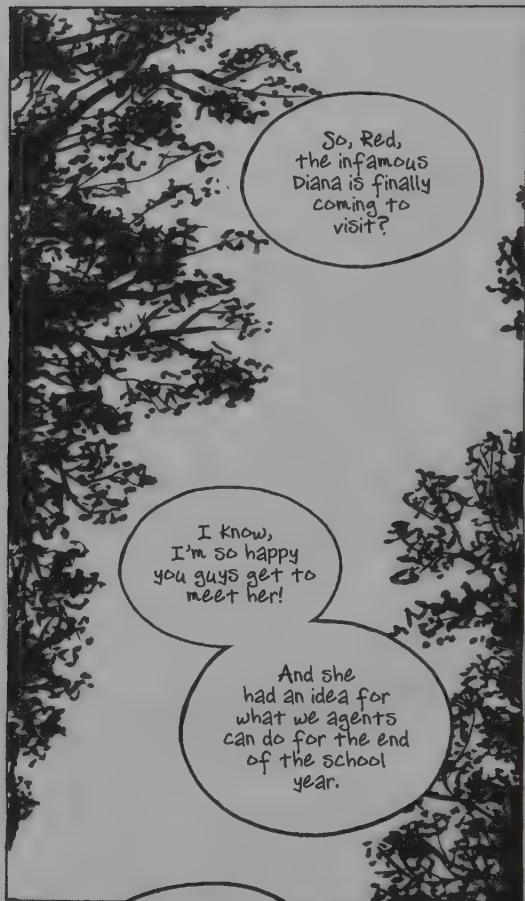
But then it's the daughter who  
draws the lines, and she might  
connect dots you didn't intend,  
making a whole different picture.



Is it gonna  
be a unicorn?  
Dolphin?  
Squirrel?



So I've gotta trust the dots she's  
given me, and she's gotta trust me  
to draw the picture myself.







The next day...

Look!  
People like it!  
The villagers  
rejoice!

That's great!  
Next time maybe  
we could plant a  
tree that grows  
sandwiches?  
I'm hungry...

Perhaps  
one made with  
sweaty ham?

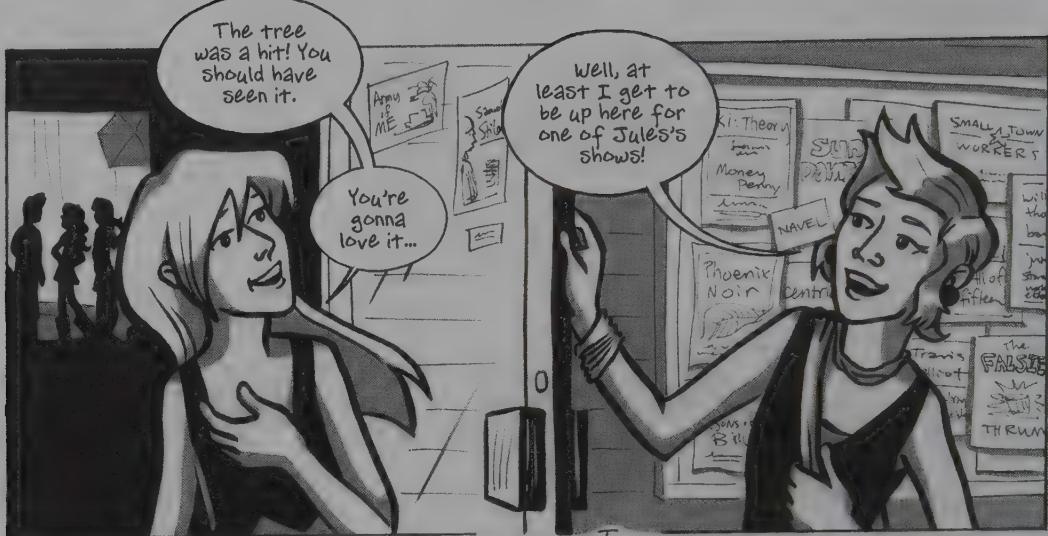
No  
thank you.

Open Me

Keep the comic and reuse the  
bottle to pass along your own  
message!

BE AN EXTRO  
BE A PAIGE





I might not be the writer my parents expected, but maybe I can live up to my name in a different way...



It hit me...

PASSPORT



Land of  
Make-Believe



...I AM an artist.

# Fun Permission Slip

I me (guardian) hereby give permission for myself (child) to be left unsupervised, encouraged to misbehave, and overindulge in merriment. He/She is authorized to act freely without apology or reprimand.

Right Now!  
Date

Yours Truly  
Signature





I think if I tried to paint what I was feeling, the pigment would be so intense, it wouldn't even stick to the canvas.



I feel like NOW things  
are finally clicking into  
place. I'm ready to get  
started with my life.



To head off on  
the REAL journey.  
Let's get this  
show on the ROAD!



I know, I know, I can't  
be Jane Eyre anymore.  
I have to make things  
happen myself...





I am the Rocktopus,  
my tentacles are dangerous,  
if you are a sushi fan I taste  
delicious! My tentacles and  
suckers make me well equipped for  
surviving in the ocean or  
rocking the kit!

Leave the ground behind us  
I'll be floating 'round your lips

I am just a host  
of arms holding  
one fool wish.

Agent G



My name is Sharkules,  
I swim the deepest seas  
and I also rule the lowest  
frequencies! My razor-sharp teeth  
and super scales let all the little  
fishes know that my bass  
lines will!

oob!

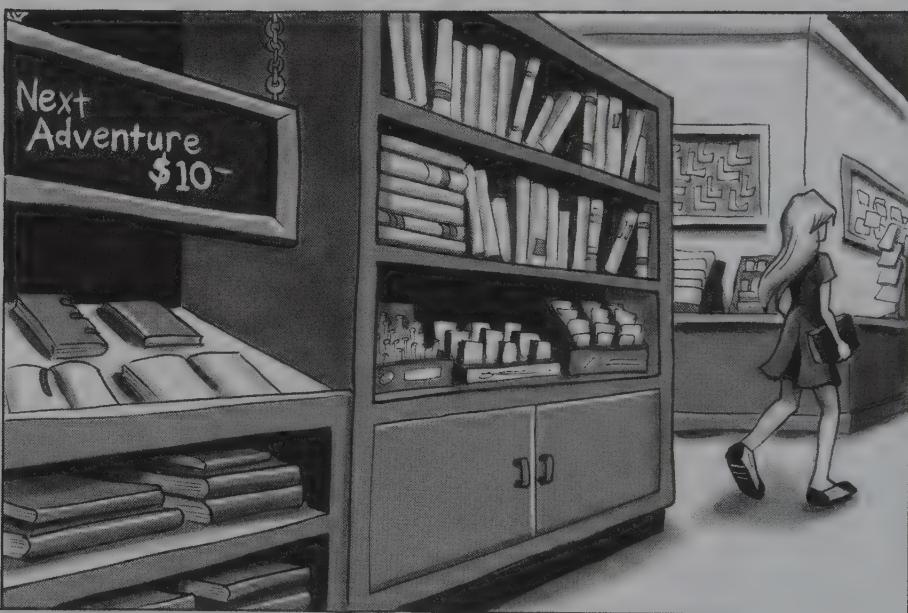
ghost  
boy

ghost





IT'S UP TO ME TO GROW  
MY OWN BEANSTALK IF I  
WANT TO CLIMB ANYWHERE.



# Acknowledgments

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## About the Author

Laura Lee Gulledge, like Paige, grew up in Virginia and moved to New York. Also like Paige, she started sharing her personal drawings online in order to try to better understand herself and her adopted city. She has worked in art education and scenic painting, among other pursuits. This is her first graphic novel. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York. Visit her online at [whoispause.com](http://whoispause.com).





## Page by Paige Soundtrack

(Selected musicians who were referenced in the book)

### Jules's Faves...

- "Infinity Guitars" - Sleigh Bells
- "Carpetbaggers" - Jenny Lewis
- "Easy" - Joanna Newsom
- "Better" - Regina Spektor
- "Cheated Hearts" - Yeah Yeah Yeahs

### Gabe's Faves...

- "Hannah" - Freelance Whales
- "Scythian Empires" - Andrew Bird
- "Anthems for a 17-Year-Old Girl" - Broken Social Scene
- "Pavement Tune" - The Frames
- "All My Friends" - LCD Soundsystem
- "This Year" - The Mountain Goats
- "Exo-Politics" - Muse

### Longo's Faves...

- "Animal" - Miike Snow
- "I'll Be Better" - Francis and the Lights

### Paige's Faves...

- "I and Love and You" - The Avett Brothers
- "Ragged Wood" - Fleet Foxes
- "Dancing with Myself" - Nouvelle Vague
- "The Clockwise Witness" - DeVotchKa
- "40 Day Dream" - Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros
- "Gobbledigook" - Sigur Rós

### Laura Lee's musician friends who have inspired and supported her...

- "Golden Days" - The Damnwells
- "Purple Weather Girl" - Samuel Stiles
- "We Will Become Ourselves Reborn" - Ki:Theory
- "Up Against Life" - Small Town Workers
- "Gravity" - The Dirty Dishes
- "Thankless" - All of Fifteen
- "Rules of the Game" - Money Penny
- "Going Through Changes" - Army Of Me



For my mother, her mother,  
and all quiet souls with  
loud imaginations

-L.G.

**PUBLISHER'S NOTE:** This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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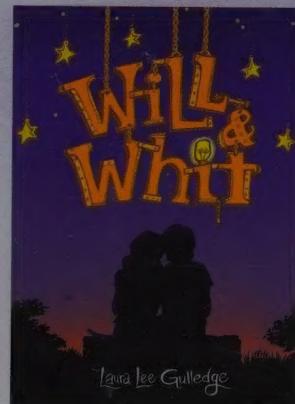


DISCARDED

# Laura Lee Gulledge

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And I feel really...alone.

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of art, identity and  
finding one's voice."

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author of  
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and SOME GIRLS ARE



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share it - rinse - repeat!"

-DEAN HASPIEL,  
creator of  
BILLY DOGMA  
and STREET CODE

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